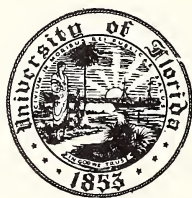



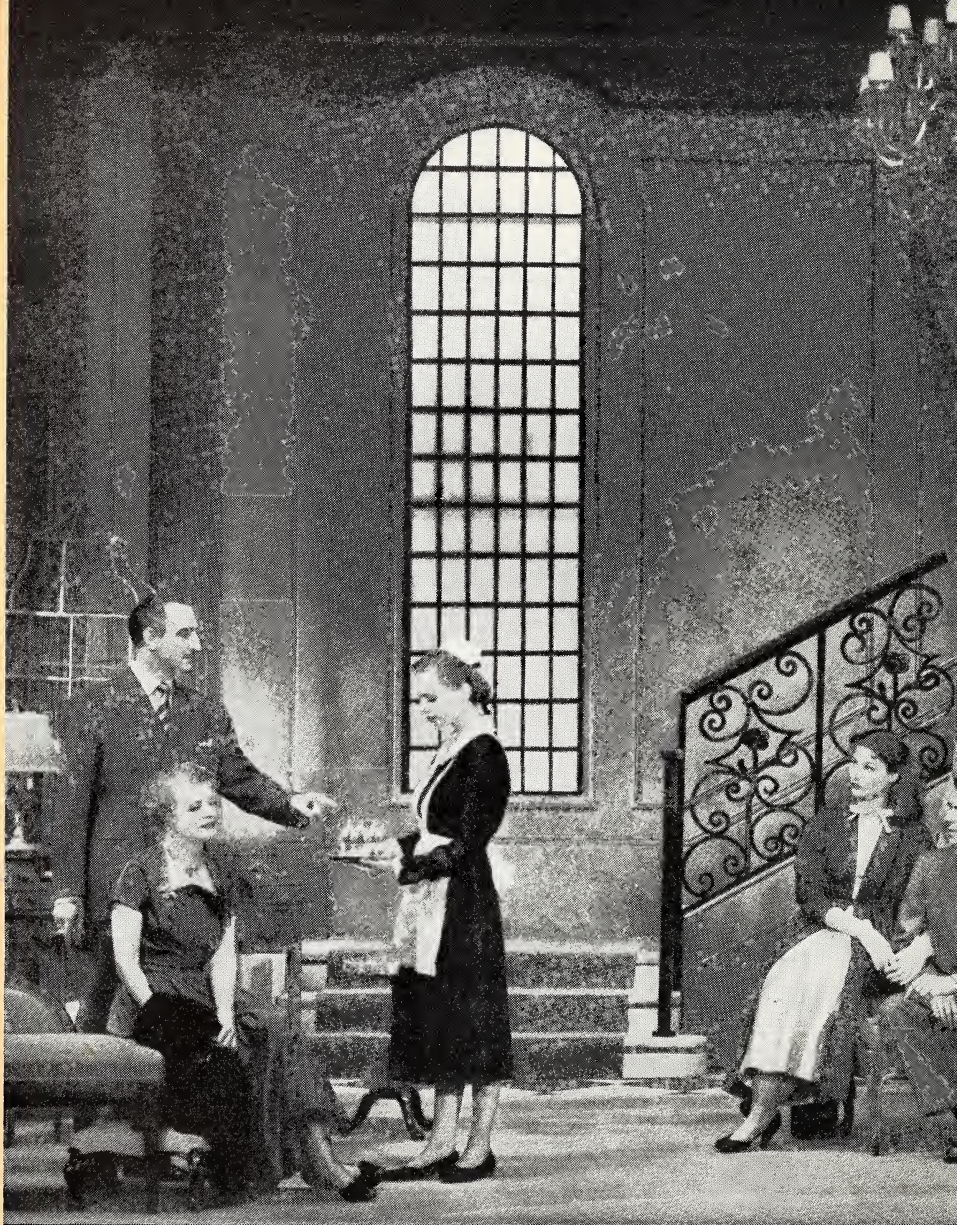


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Random House, New York



JANE

A comedy by **S. N. BEHRMAN**

Based upon an original story by **W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM**

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

JANE

TO W. S. M.

Jane was produced by the Theatre Guild, Inc., at the Coronet Theatre, New York City, on the night of February 1, 1952, with the following cast:

CAST
(In Order of Appearance)

ANN TOWER	<i>Adrienne Corri</i>
PETER CREWE	<i>William Whitman</i>
WILSON	<i>Al Collins</i>
WILLIAM TOWER	<i>Basil Rathbone</i>
MILLICENT TOWER	<i>Irene Browne</i>
JANE FOWLER	<i>Edna Best</i>
MAID	<i>Sarah Marshall</i>
LORD FROBISHER	<i>Howard St. John</i>
GILBERT DABNEY	<i>Philip Friend</i>

Directed by Cyril Ritchard

Production under the supervision of
Theresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner

Associate director, Armina Marshall
Settings and costumes designed by Elfi von Kantzow

SCENE

The entire action takes place in Mrs. Tower's drawing room,
Regents Park, London.

ACT ONE

September, 1937

ACT TWO

Late March, 1938

ACT THREE

Ten days later

ACT ONE

ACT ONE

SCENE: At MRS. TOWER'S, Hyde Park Gate, London. A hall-like living room with French windows at the right leading into a lovely English garden. MRS. TOWER is constantly redecorating her house; she lets off steam by doing it. At the moment the left wall is made entirely of antique glass in panels. When MRS. TOWER looks at the wall, as she frequently does to fix her face or touch up her hair, she gets a wavering, merciful, Melissandish reflection. For the rest, the room is furnished with gaiety and charm. There are flowers everywhere, and in one corner an elaborate bird cage containing MRS. TOWER'S canaries, which she feeds intermittently when she has nothing better to do.

TIME: September, 1937.

AT RISE: ANN TOWER, a lovely young girl, comes in with PETER CREWE. PETER is twenty-three, negligently dressed, with a sensitive, scholastic face, a humorous mouth, and keen eyes. As soon as she comes in, ANN rings for the butler.

ANN

(A little breathless)

I hope my father hasn't arrived yet.

PETER

Are you very anxious to see him?

ANN

To tell you the truth, Peter, I've always been rather a little scared of him. But he is my father and I haven't seen him in two years. (WILSON comes in) Oh, Wilson, has Mr. Tower been here?

J A N E

WILSON

Not yet, Miss.

ANN

(Very much relieved)

Oh, good! Is Mother home?

WILSON

She's out, I believe, Miss Ann.

ANN

Thank you, Wilson.

WILSON

Tea, Miss?

ANN

No, thank you, Wilson. Mr. Crewe would prefer a whiskey and soda, I believe. I'll get him one.

WILSON

Very good, Miss.

(He goes out.)

ANN

(Pouring drink)

Well, you haven't said anything about Father's play yet. Didn't you like it?

PETER

Though the program says it's contemporary, it had the flavor of a period piece. Beautifully written though—a perfectly articulated fossil. *(She looks hurt)* Forgive me, darling.

J A N E

ANN

Peter, I'm going to say something very brazen to you. If you weren't already married—would you marry me?

PETER

(With humorous tenderness)

No, I don't think so.

ANN

Why not?

PETER

I don't think it would be a very sensible thing for you to do.

ANN

I don't want a sensible marriage. I want a love marriage.

PETER

We have love now. Why not let well enough alone?

ANN

I feel so frustrated. I can't even enjoy the luxury of hating your wife. I feel so sorry for her. Where is she now, do you suppose?

PETER

Hard to say. When I last heard from her she was in Vienna. Maybe she's there. Maybe she's in a concentration camp somewhere. I can't find out where she is.

JANE

ANN

I think it was wonderful of you to marry her—just to give her a passport.

PETER

Unfortunately it didn't work.

(*A moment.*)

ANN

(*Sighs wistfully*)

I wish you'd marry me—to give *me* a passport—a passport to happiness. (*This makes him smile*) Why do you always laugh at me?

PETER

It's that phrase—it makes me laugh. It has the charm of the long since bygone.

ANN

Don't you believe in happiness?

PETER

Oh, darling . . . Even if I didn't believe it, you would have proved to me that it still is possible.

ANN

Peter, I love you . . .

PETER

I love you, too. (*She kisses him*) Your mother can't bear me.

(*He chuckles.*)

JANE

ANN

But *I* can . . .

PETER

Although you'd never know it the way your mother and her friends go on, we're sitting on top of a cauldron. Any moment there's going to be a hell of a blow-up and we're all going down the drain. As soon as it happens I shall enlist. And you talk about happiness that lasts forever!

ANN

I'll never marry anyone else. I've told Mother that.

PETER

From her point of view, you know . . .

ANN

Well?

PETER

Your mother's a very silly woman, but from her point of view I can perfectly understand her antagonism to me. I'm a semi-employed journalist with an uncontrollable passion for writing poetry. Terrible secret vice!

ANN

One day it will become public.

PETER

Well, I can't accuse *you* of being pessimistic, anyhow.

J A N E

ANN

(*A little helpless*)

Oh, dear!

PETER

(*Rallying her*)

You know, Ann, sometimes I'm tempted to tell your mother I'm married—just to see the effect on her.

ANN

(*Alarmed*)

Oh, please don't do that, please! It would give her too much satisfaction! It would be the last straw!

PETER

By the way, Ann, through the underground of the unemployed in Fleet Street I heard of a job in Manchester.

ANN

Manchester is so gloomy! (*Desperately*) There must be something here in London—there must. You write so brilliantly!

PETER

(*Dryly*)

I quite agree with you, but you and I are the only ones who seem to know it.

ANN

(*Suddenly struck with a wonderful idea*)

Peter—I say!

JANE

PETER

What?

ANN

Lord Frobisher! Why not get a job with Lord Frobisher?

PETER

What as? Valet?

ANN

No. On one of his papers. He is a great friend of Mother's.
In fact . . .

PETER

What?

ANN

It is popularly supposed that he broke up Mother's marriage. He owes Mother something, wouldn't you say? The least he could do in return is to give you a job.

PETER

But, darling, he's on the wrong side of everything.

ANN

Perhaps you could switch him to the right side.

PETER

He's done awfully well being on the wrong side. I'm afraid not.

JANE

ANN

Well, I'm going to try. I won't hear of your burying yourself in Manchester. If you do—I warn you—I'll follow you!

PETER

That would make Manchester far less gloomy!

WILSON

(Comes in and announces)

Mr. Tower.

(WILLIAM TOWER walks in. The actor who plays WILLIAM TOWER will do well to study the portraits and read the works of W. Somerset Maugham. It will be particularly helpful to him to read The Summing Up by this writer. TOWER wears a monocle on a broad black ribbon with which he habitually fixes people.)

ANN

(Rushes to her father)

Dad!

TOWER

Hello, Ann darling. It's lovely to see you again.

(They embrace.)

ANN

This is Peter Crewe, a great friend of mine.

TOWER

How do you do?

J A N E

PETER

How do you do, sir?

ANN

He's a journalist—and a poet.

TOWER

Fascinating combination. Hovering between fact and fancy.

PETER

Sometimes the poetry is the fact, sir, and the journalism is the fancy.

TOWER

I suspect that when I read the London papers—especially Lord Frobisher's.

ANN

Well, Dad, you're looking grand. How's Africa?

TOWER

Enormous!

(There is an awkward pause, which TOWER does nothing to mitigate)

ANN

(A little desperately)

Peter was saying the other day how much he envied you.

TOWER

(With no flicker of interest)

Really? Why?

JANE

PETER

(To help ANN out)

Er—your knack for lucrative travel. I mean to say, office in your head. You want to go to San Francisco—you go to San Francisco. Impulse toward Siam—you go to Siam. And wherever you go, you write your stuff and the editors gobble it up. Ideal life—really— *(As he gets no encouragement he laughs nervously and turns to go)* Yes—well, Ann, I'm sure your father wants to be left alone with you.

TOWER

(Corroborating)

I haven't seen Ann for a couple of years, you know.

ANN

Peter is coming back in any case to take me to dinner. *(To TOWER)* Perhaps you'll join us.

TOWER

Thank you very much. I'm dining out. But perhaps we can lunch tomorrow?

ANN

Lovely! Good-bye, Peter darling. See you in a minute.

PETER

Good-bye, Mr. Tower.

TOWER

(Has already dismissed him)

Good-bye. *(PETER is amused at TOWER's willingness to be*

JANE

rid of him. He expects it and understands it. He goes out, blowing a kiss to ANN, which she returns, behind TOWER's back)

Well, Ann!

ANN

You weren't very cordial to my young man.

TOWER

Oh, is he your young man?

ANN

He is indeed!

TOWER

Journalism is the most insecure of professions. Poetry isn't a profession at all. It's a luxury. Can Mr. Crewe afford it?

ANN

Haven't changed a bit, have you, darling?

TOWER

Thank you. Or perhaps you didn't mean it as a compliment.

ANN

You know, you do have a knack for diminishing people! You're supposed to be heartless, cynical.

TOWER

(Very kindly)

Your mother always used that word to describe me with-

JANE

out in the least understanding its original meaning. It's fashionable to confuse skepticism with cynicism. Now, Ann dear, don't take on your mother's patter. Develop your own. It'll be equally shallow, but at least it won't be borrowed. But tell me, hasn't your mother altered all the furniture?

ANN

Oh, you haven't seen this, have you? Everything that Mother could pickle, she pickled; and what she couldn't pickle, she painted.

TOWER

(As he takes in the room)

Everything harmonizes, nothing matches.

ANN

(Laughs; after a moment)

How long will you be in London?

TOWER

About a month, I expect.

ANN

Where do you go then?

TOWER

India.

ANN

Isn't it funny, Dad? I admire you enormously and I'm very fond of you and proud too and yet . . .

JANE

TOWER

Yes?

ANN

I'm shy with you.

TOWER

Well, when it comes to that, perhaps I am with you.

ANN

I'm sure you are. I feel I don't know you at all. Your writings are lucid but you personally, you're somewhat . . .

TOWER

(Helps her out)

Opaque?

ANN

Yes. That's it! You know, I often wonder why you don't marry again. Is there any one on the horizon?

TOWER

Even if there were I shouldn't marry it.

ANN

Why not?

TOWER

One reason is I can't afford to marry again because your mother gets most of my income.

ANN

You must have been very unhappy with her to give up so much.

JANE

TOWER

(Rather grimly)

Your mother drove a hard bargain, but, had she known it, she might have driven an even harder one.

ANN

(She is watching him, decides to try him out on a little plan of her own)

Guess who's coming today, Dad.

TOWER

Who?

ANN

Allan Frobisher.

TOWER

(Very amiably, rather pleased, in fact)

Oh, really? How is the old pirate?

ANN

If you wait long enough, you'll probably see for yourself. He generally drops in for a drink about this time.

TOWER

That's still on, is it?

ANN

I have a feeling . . .

(She stops, embarrassed.)

TOWER

What, dear?

JANE

ANN

That Allan and Mother—will get married one of these days.

TOWER

Speed the day!

ANN

What do you mean?

TOWER

Simply that if Allan married your mother I could afford a few luxuries in my declining years.

ANN

Haven't you forgiven him yet?

TOWER

For what?

ANN

(A bit awkwardly)

Well . . . now really, Dad . . . I'm sure you . . .

TOWER

Oh, that! My dear Ann, you don't suppose that was in the least Allan's doing!

ANN

You're very tolerant.

JANE

(MRS. TOWER comes in. She is chic, gay, assured, and her devotion to calisthenics has kept her willowy. She has a springy walk and knows that she moves well. She is therefore almost constantly in motion. At the moment she is very much upset over the contents of a telegram which she has picked up in the hall and has just read. She is not too surprised to see her former husband, as he is always dropping in from far places.)

MRS. TOWER

Hello, Willie! Well, it's very nice to see you.

TOWER

Thank you.

MRS. TOWER

I say, he looks splendid, doesn't he? Younger every day. It must be wonderful to be a man. You can keep a vestige of your looks without devoting all your life to it. Oh, but my darlings, I'm really upset. Ann, what do you think has happened? (*She waves the telegram in the air*) I've just had this telegram. She's coming! She's coming again!

ANN

Who, Mother?

MRS. TOWER

Who? Who would put me in such a state? Jane, of course. Jane Fowler. It really is naughty of her. I have so many engagements, I really don't know where to turn.

JANE

TOWER

Jane Fowler? I seem to remember the name.

ANN

(*Smiles*)

Jane is Mother's cross.

MRS. TOWER

(*Tragically*)

She's coming tomorrow!

TOWER

Jane Fowler? Isn't that your sister-in-law and doesn't she live in Liverpool?

MRS. TOWER

Not enough! I never saw her after Harry and I had that row. But when he died Jane fastened herself on to me. I'm her only living relative and she makes a fetish of it.

ANN

But Mother, she *is* kind. She does bring you tea-cozies and doilies. She knits them with her own hands.

MRS. TOWER

She's worthy, she's dowdy, she's provincial. She looks twenty years older than I do and she's perfectly capable of telling anyone she meets that we were at school together. When she comes to London it never occurs to her to stay anywhere but here—she thinks it would hurt my feelings—and she stays for three or four weeks. Entertains all her Liverpool friends here—just as dowdy as she is. Thank God it's tomorrow and not today.

JANE

TOWER

I should think, Millicent, that a woman with your social experience would find a way to deal with a situation like this.

MRS. TOWER

But don't you see, Willie, I haven't a chance. Jane's so unbearably kind. She bores me to death, but I wouldn't for a moment let her suspect it. It's the kind of thing you could do, but I couldn't.

TOWER

I have never believed in encouraging bores.

MRS. TOWER

I know. You retire behind that mask.

TOWER

(To ANN)

Shall I lend your mother my mask?

MRS. TOWER

Tomorrow! Of all days! Just when I've asked dozens of people to dinner.

TOWER

Everything goes on quite as usual, doesn't it?

MRS. TOWER

(*With some asperity*)

I hope, dear, you don't think life stops in London just because you choose to go to Africa. This is all I needed! And she'll expect to see her tea-cozies! She'll expect to see her doilies!

JANE

TOWER

Can't you just put them on to grace her visit?

MRS. TOWER

I've burnt them!

ANN

I don't care how funny she looks—I adore her. She has a heart of gold.

MRS. TOWER

I can't bear people with hearts of gold. If this continues I shall have to leave London. (*To TOWER*) Jane will force me into going back to Africa with you.

TOWER

(*To ward off such a possibility*)

I'm going to India.

ANN

(*Laughing*)

You frightened him, Mother.

MRS. TOWER

(*Wryly*)

Isn't Africa big enough for both of us, Willie?

ANN

Nice to have Dad back in London—isn't it, Mother?

MRS. TOWER

(*Weighing it judiciously*)

Well, I'd rather have him than Jane.

JANE

TOWER

From the avidity with which you are awaiting this elderly frump from Liverpool, I may take that as a superlative compliment.

MRS. TOWER

Elderly? She's not elderly. She's my age. Am I elderly?

TOWER

I've never seen you look more handsome.

ANN

Mother does look well, doesn't she?

MRS. TOWER

Oh, the art it takes! The craft it takes! When Jane's here it all goes for nothing. She's perfectly capable of saying to a full dinner table: "Millie, dear"—she calls me Millie, which I loathe—"Millie, dear, don't you think at *your* age—you shouldn't do quite so much?" She's always telling me that I do too much. After a week of Jane I'm psychologically ready for a wheel chair, a hot water bottle and a cup of Ovaltine at night.

TOWER

Is she well off?

MRS. TOWER

Oh, very. She and my brother built up the largest department store in Liverpool. When he died, Jane sold it for millions!

JANE

TOWER

(This clarifies it for him)

Ah!

MRS. TOWER

Why do you say "Ah" in that cynical way?

TOWER

(Innocent)

Did I say "Ah"?

MRS. TOWER

You certainly did! What good does Jane's fortune do me? Jane'll live forever. They always do in Liverpool. And she takes care of herself! God, how that woman takes care of herself! She's in bed every night by ten.

ANN

(Starts to go)

Don't go away, Dad. *(Kisses the top of his head)* I expect to see a lot of you this time, my fascinating, remote father.

TOWER

As much as you like, my darling.

ANN

Wonderful!

(She goes upstairs.)

MRS. TOWER

Well, Willie, you've come in the nick of time.

JANE

TOWER

To meet Jane?

MRS. TOWER

No. To do something about Ann. She's your responsibility, too, you know.

TOWER

What's wrong with Ann? She looks very well and seems reasonably happy.

MRS. TOWER

It's that awful young man she's involved with.

TOWER

You mean Peter Crewe?

MRS. TOWER

Oh, you've met him. Of course. He's always here. I simply can't bear that boy.

TOWER

He seems very nice. What's wrong with him?

MRS. TOWER

(Venomously)

He's so arrogant!

TOWER

(Tolerantly)

That will pass when he has something to be arrogant about!

JANE

MRS. TOWER

He hasn't a penny!

TOWER

That is more relevant.

MRS. TOWER

Of all the people we know that Ann should pick on him. He hasn't even got a job. He can't possibly marry her.

TOWER

Then what are you worried about?

MRS. TOWER

He's keeping her from marrying anyone else. It's high time Ann married and married well. You must see to it, Willie. Exert your authority.

TOWER

I never heard such nonsense. I am sure the moment I told Ann to give up Peter Crewe it would automatically make permanent what otherwise might be a fleeting attachment.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, I don't mean that you should forbid her. Nothing as crude as that. Just disparage him. No one in the world is half as good as you at general disparagement. Deflate him. She thinks he's profound. Make her see that he's shallow.

TOWER

In order to deflate this young man I should have to see him, and that would be a trivial use of my time.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Selfish as ever! Your devotion to yourself amounts to a cult.

TOWER

I find it as diverting as any other cult.

MRS. TOWER

(*Abruptly*)

You haven't said anything about my hair!

TOWER

(*Looking at it*)

You've done very well by it!

MRS. TOWER

I don't know why it is, but gray hair in a man always looks distinguished. In a woman it's hideous. (*Looks into the mirrored wall*) So I dyed mine. When it's entirely gray I shall cease to dye it. Then people will say what a young face I have.

TOWER

They may say so now.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, I never made a secret of my age. I fully admit to forty.

TOWER

(*Dryly*)

Candor could go no further!

JANE

MRS. TOWER

People add five years automatically, so it's more of an admission than you think. You know, Willie, I don't think it's any compliment to me that you don't marry again. It looks as though the experience was so devastating that you daren't risk it.

TOWER

It works both ways. Why don't you?

MRS. TOWER

(A bit sentimental)

You were the most maddening and unsatisfactory of husbands. But the fact is—after you—all the men I meet seem tame.

TOWER

(Rallying her)

Still Allan Frobisher *is* coming **today**, isn't he?

MRS. TOWER

Yes. He comes every day. I warn you, Willie . . .

TOWER

What about?

MRS. TOWER

Allan is trembling on the brink!

TOWER

(Calmly)

I think I may trust you to push him over.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Oh, well—I suppose the time will come when he will tire of all these actresses he runs around with and want to settle down. He's very impulsive. (*In a dream of romantic speculation*) I wonder what I should say if he suddenly asked me to marry him.

TOWER

I should articulate, as clearly as possible, the word "yes."

MRS. TOWER

Nothing will induce me to marry Allan. He's always rushing off to Birmingham or Manchester or some place to buy a newspaper. His appetite for newspapers is insatiable.

TOWER

So with all his appetites!

MRS. TOWER

You know, Willie, it's not easy to forget you. Your books keep reminding me. I know you so well—I see you in all of them.

TOWER

Why don't you simply not read them?

MRS. TOWER

I haven't got your self-control. I wish I had!

WILSON

(*Enters and announces*)

Mrs. Fowler!

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(Horried, almost screams)

Jane!

(JANE FOWLER comes in. At first sight she is, indeed, an odd bundle; one gets the impression of a vital little middle-aged lady activating a mass of old-fashioned and excessive clothing. She wears, over everything else, a cloak that oddly combines severity with fussiness, under it a long dress of heavy stuff, voluminous as though she wore under it innumerable petticoats, and stout shoes. Her hat suggests the nineteenth century rather than the twentieth. And yet, on closer inspection, one notices first an extraordinary freshness of complexion and clear eyes that look at the world with candor and benevolence. JANE'S movement and gestures are at variance with the heavy armament of her clothes; they are lithe, clear-cut and direct. She has a winning and lit-up smile. Except sartorially, one gets the impression, oddly, of youth, vitality and clarity of outlook, even eagerness.)

JANE

(Fondly)

How are you, Millie dear?

(They embrace and kiss.)

MRS. TOWER

But Jane! I wasn't expecting you till tomorrow!

JANE

JANE

So Wilson said. But if you looked at the date on my telegram you would have seen that I sent it yesterday. Have you got the telegram? It said: "Arrive tomorrow." That's today. Where is the telegram?

MRS. TOWER

It doesn't matter. I'm very pleased to see you.

JANE

(*Looks at TOWER*)

Who is *this* gentleman?

MRS. TOWER

(*Still recovering*)

Oh, this is my . . . you know . . . my former hus . . .

JANE

(*With pleasure*)

Is this William Tower? (*Goes to him; extends her hand*)
I am so pleased to meet you!

TOWER

(*Taking her hand*)

How do you do?

JANE

I've always wanted to meet you. But when you and Millie were married my husband was still alive and we never left Liverpool. We were far too happy to care to travel.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Won't you have some tea, Jane?

(She pushes button on wall.)

JANE

Oh, yes, please. If it wouldn't be too much trouble. I'll just take off my mantle. *(She takes off her cloak, which TOWER holds as she turns her back to the audience, revealing a black cardigan sweater she has on underneath. She takes off the scarf around her neck. She then takes her cloak from TOWER)* Thank you. *(She folds the cloak neatly, puts it on the back of the sofa and sits. She doesn't remove her hat. Around her neck is a fairly large silver locket on a black ribbon)* There! That's a bit more comfortable. Have you found my telegram, Millie?

MRS. TOWER

It doesn't matter now.

JANE

But I want to show you . . .

TOWER

(Takes telegram from desk)

Here is the telegram.

JANE

Ah! Thank you. *(With a hint of triumph)* There, you see, Millie! It is dated Liverpool, the seventeenth. And it says, "Arrive tomorrow"—that is today—the eighteenth. Always

JANE

look at the *date* at the top of the telegram. That is the most important thing in a telegram—the date it was sent. You remember that.

MRS. TOWER

(*Fuming*)

I'll try!

JANE

How is my darling Ann?

MRS. TOWER

Oh, very well. She'll be down in a moment.

JANE

Has she found a young man yet?

MRS. TOWER

Yes. But I wish she hadn't.

JANE

What do you mean by that, Millie?

MRS. TOWER

He's a left-wing maniac who wants us to go to war over Czechoslovakia! Imagine! War again! Where is Czechoslovakia, Willie?

TOWER

Do you really want to know, Millicent?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Not passionately.

(WILSON enters with tea table, followed by maid. They put small tea tables in front of the sofa on which JANE and TOWER are sitting, and in front of chair in which MRS. TOWER is sitting.)

JANE

Tea! How wonderful. I am so thirsty. (*To the MAID*) The train was twenty minutes late. (*The MAID gives her an incredulous look and follows WILSON out*) Won't you sit beside me, Mr. Tower?

TOWER

(*Complying*)

Thank you.

JANE

I must tell you straight off I haven't read one of your books. Now I shall.

TOWER

It isn't compulsory.

JANE

I hardly ever read a new book. I always re-read the old ones.

TOWER

Excellent idea.

JANE

JANE

I have seen several of your comedies, though, when they played in Liverpool. They were very interesting. But the characters were strange to me—like foreigners. They always seemed so nervous. (MRS. TOWER *risés and serves them with cups of tea*) They made things so hard for themselves.

MRS. TOWER

Why, Jane, what an odd comment!

TOWER

It's perfectly justified. It's the modern character, Mrs. Fowler. It lacks serenity.

JANE

There was one I remember in which the heroine—I suppose you'd call her the heroine, though her conduct was anything but heroic—suddenly took it into her head to have an affair in a pergola. Such an odd choice! So drafty. So visible! But it was all very amusing just the same. We enjoyed it *very* much.

TOWER

I'm glad.

WILSON

(*Comes in*)

Excuse me, Madam, Lord Frobisher telephoned earlier to say he'd be unable to dine but will drop in for a cup of tea.

MRS. TOWER

Thank you, Wilson.

(WILSON *goes out.*)

JANE

JANE

Lord Frobisher? That name is familiar.

MRS. TOWER

(*Brushing it off*)

Canadian by birth. Can't stop buying newspapers.

JANE

Is that Allan Frobisher?

MRS. TOWER

Yes. Do have some of these cakes, Jane. They're really very nice.

JANE

Of course. Allan Frobisher.

TOWER

Do you know him?

JANE

No. Only through Millie's conversation. There was a period a few years back, wasn't there, Millie, when you simply couldn't keep Mr. Frobisher—he wasn't a lord then—out of your conversation? You were always telling me how wonderful and fascinating he was. I remember thinking such enthusiasm odd in a married woman. Especially (*Turns and smiles at TOWER*) as you already had a husband who was both those things.

TOWER

Thank you, Mrs. Fowler.

J A N E

JANE

Do you remember, Millie?

TOWER

(Enjoying himself)

I quite agree, Mrs. Fowler. A married woman should have only one enthusiasm—her husband.

JANE

(Literally)

Oh, I quite agree. I remember saying so to Millie. *(Turns to MRS. TOWER)* But won't it be rather awkward entertaining Lord Frobisher with Mr. Tower here?

TOWER

(Dramatically)

I shall disappear.

JANE

You mustn't do that. Now that I've just met you, I want to get to know you better.

TOWER

If you wish me to, I shall stay.

JANE

Thank you. I find you very sympathetic. *(To MRS. TOWER)* What have you done with the tea-cozy I gave you last time? Don't you use it?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(Puts teapot down guiltily)

Oh, Jane, we used it every day. Unfortunately, we had an accident with it. It got burnt.

JANE

But the last one I gave you got burnt.

MRS. TOWER

You must think us very careless.

JANE

(Smiles forgivingly)

It doesn't really matter. I shall enjoy making you another. I'll go to Liberty's tomorrow and buy the silks.

TOWER

(Noticing the locket she is wearing)

What a lovely locket!

JANE

Do you like it?

TOWER

It's very pretty.

JANE

I'm so glad you like old things. My husband gave me this when we were married. It contains his photograph. Would you like to see him?

JANE

TOWER

Very much.

JANE

(*Snapping it open and displaying it*)

There he is.

TOWER

Very handsome. I love that cravat and those mustaches.
So masculine. So flamboyant.

JANE

(*Snapping locket back*)

And he was as good as he was handsome. Millie was at the wedding. (*Turns to MRS. TOWER, who is drinking her tea*)
Do you remember, Millie?

MRS. TOWER

Oh . . . yes . . . vaguely . . .

JANE

It will be thirty-one years ago next Wednesday. (MRS. TOWER *hastily puts her cup down*) I remember because the next day was Millie's birthday and I saved her a piece of the wedding cake. Do you remember that birthday party, Millie? It was your twenty-first . . .

MRS. TOWER

(*Cutting in quickly*)

Do have one of these cakes, Jane. They're really quite delicious.

JANE

(*Munching one*)

U-m-m. They *are* good.

JANE

TOWER
(*Sadistic*)

What an excellent memory your sister-in-law has, Millicent!

MRS. TOWER
(*Acidly*)

Yes. Hasn't she?

JANE

When you live quietly and do little you remember more. I always think Millie does too much. You wouldn't think, to look at us, would you, Mr. Tower, that Millie and I were at school together? But of course I've lived a very quiet life.

TOWER

Millicent, your charming sister-in-law has a gift for innuendo.

JANE
(*Genuinely inquiring*)

What do you mean by that, William? May I call you William?

TOWER

Certainly, nobody else does. That will make a unique bond between us.

MRS. TOWER
(*Witheringly*)

He is known, by those who fancy themselves his intimates, as "Willie."

JANE

JANE

That is much too informal for an author as famous as he is. I shall call you William. (*Smiles at TOWER*) That's how I've always thought of you. When you and Millie were married I used to say in my letters to her "Give my love to dear William." Didn't she ever do it?

TOWER

Invariably. And I was always so happy to get your love.

JANE

Thank you, William. (*But she never lets slip a point; she fixes TOWER with her clear, steady glance*) What did you mean just now when you said I had a gift for innuendo?

TOWER

(*Sincerely*)

Forgive me!

JANE

Why? It would be a very nice gift to have. I haven't got it, I'm afraid. (*A considerable pause. JANE is enjoying her tea very much; between sips she smiles at the TOWERS benignly*) Isn't it nice not to have to talk? One can do that only with relations who understand each other and who love each other.

TOWER

When I'm stuck in a conversation I always flatter. That's always the safe thing.

JANE

JANE
(*Rather shocked*)

Flatter?

TOWER
Yes. Nearly everyone's vain, don't you think?

JANE
I suppose so. Still, if you will forgive me, William, I don't quite see that. If the person that you flatter is intelligent he knows what you're doing. If he isn't, why do you want his good opinion?

TOWER
I don't want his good opinion. I just want to fill in those awful pauses in conversation.

JANE
Oh, I love a pause in a conversation. It always gives me time to collect my thoughts.

(*There follows a pause in the conversation—quite a longish one. JANE is making a hearty tea.*)

TOWER
(*Finally*)
I see you're enjoying this one, Mrs. Fowler. Are you collecting your thoughts?

JANE
You must call me Jane.

J A N E

TOWER

Jane. Are you collecting your thoughts, Jane?

JANE

Yes. I have some news which I am getting ready to tell you.

MRS. TOWER

News. What news, Jane?

JANE

I am so glad you are here, too, William, so that you will hear it as well. Although I have only just met you I *do* look upon you as one of the family.

MRS. TOWER

Isn't that nice? That's just how Willie loves to be looked on.

JANE

(*A little severely*)

After all, he is Ann's father. I still think of him as related to you, Millie.

MRS. TOWER

(*To TOWER*)

Jane sets great store by relations.

JANE

When all else fails us we have *them*.

JANE

TOWER

But what is your news, Jane? I am agog to hear.

JANE

I am about to be married.

MRS. TOWER

(Jumps up)

What?

TOWER

My congratulations.

JANE

Thank you, William.

MRS. TOWER

Jane, you're not serious.

JANE

One doesn't marry if one is not serious. That is why I came just at this particular moment. I'm going to be married tomorrow morning. You shall come with me to the Registrar's, of course. And you too, William.

TOWER

I am going to India.

JANE

Tomorrow?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Tell us all about it. Who is it? Who's the lucky bridegroom?

JANE

I have asked my young man to come here to meet you. You'll see him very soon.

MRS. TOWER

(Chuckling)

It's too sweet to hear you talk about your young man!

JANE

You mustn't expect anyone too old. You wouldn't want me to marry some decrepit old man with one foot in the grave, would you?

(She giggles.)

MRS. TOWER

Oh, Jane, how wonderful! And, tell me, are you going to live in Liverpool?

JANE

No. My young man's profession requires that we live in London.

MRS. TOWER

(A horrid chasm yawns before her)

Oh!

JANE

JANE

So you and I shall be able to see a lot of each other.
Won't that be lovely?

MRS. TOWER

Yes, heavenly!

JANE

And I hope we shall see a lot of you too, William.

TOWER

Unfortunately I am going to India . . .

JANE

Yes, I know. So you said. But surely not tomorrow. I insist upon your being a witness at our wedding. My young man is such a dear! I do hope you'll like him.

MRS. TOWER

I'm sure we shall. I can't wait to meet him.

JANE

He'll be here any minute. If you will excuse me . . . (*She rises, as does TOWER, and starts taking her things off sofa. TOWER helps her*) I shall go upstairs and get out of these traveling things. My usual room, Millie?

MRS. TOWER

Yes, dear.

JANE

You're not going right away, are you, William?

JANE

TOWER

Certainly not. Not till I've met your "young man."

JANE

(With a shy, winning smile)

I see you don't believe in my young man. Is Ann in her room? I must look in and tell her. *(She stops a moment at the stair landing)* I'm so pleased to have met you at last, William. I always thought you'd be rather formidable. You're not a bit. You're, if I may say so, you're quite—cozy!

(She goes upstairs.)

MRS. TOWER

(The moment JANE has gone, pounces on TOWER)

Well, my cozy boy, what do you make of that?

TOWER

I'm certainly curious to see what he's like.

MRS. TOWER

Can't you imagine? Very big and massive, with an enormous gold chain across an enormous tummy, a great big florid face and a booming voice.

TOWER

Did you notice when she spoke of her young man her voice got a bit funny and tremulous?

MRS. TOWER

Yes. It made me want to laugh.

JANE

TOWER

I found it rather touching.

MRS. TOWER

Don't be sentimental, Willie. It doesn't become you.

TOWER

I am rarely accused of being sentimental. I insist—in view of what Jane's young man probably is—I found it touching.

MRS. TOWER

Don't you love the way she treated us like a happy family quivering with the joy of reunion? Really, Jane is unique. Can you imagine that such people still exist?

TOWER

If she knew *us* better she might find it hard to believe that *we* exist!

WILSON

(Enters and announces)

Lord Frobisher!

(ALLAN FROBISHER is in his early fifties, medium-sized but so instinct with success and power that he seems, somehow, a bit larger than life. He is crusty, sadistic, humorous, aware of his reputation for these attributes and constantly, often deliberately, supporting it. He has discovered that people who have, on their own, achieved the success in life that he has can be overbearing and brutal and that it only serves to build up the popular picture of them as salty characters.)

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

Oh, Allan . . .

FROBISHER

Hello, Millicent. And Willie! Quite like old times. How are you?

TOWER

Very well, thank you. (*They shake hands*) I needn't ask you. Obviously, you are flourishing.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, Allan's a miracle of survival!

FROBISHER

(*A glance at MRS. TOWER*)

There's a sting in that somewhere. But I don't mind a bit. (*To TOWER*) Why, Willie, I wake up every morning feeling that life is a new adventure. Resent sleeping.

TOWER

How do you keep so young? Is it those grubby newspapers?

FROBISHER

Women! Try them.

TOWER

(*To MRS. TOWER*)

Allan insists so on his virility I begin to suspect it.

FROBISHER

You haven't changed a bit, have you, Willie—which is rather regrettable.

JANE

MRS. TOWER
(To FROBISHER)

Don't think you can make up for canceling dinner by just dropping in for tea.

FROBISHER

European situation looked a bit sultry. Thought I'd better stay close to the office.

MRS. TOWER

Nonsense! I'm sure it's a glamour girl. I'll ring for some more tea.

FROBISHER

Don't bother. I'll have a whiskey. (*He goes to liquor table and pours himself a drink. Addresses TOWER*) When I was young—I don't in the least mind admitting it—I was notoriously unsuccessful with women, and now I'm making up for lost time. When I first barged in on London from Canada, I was very poor and considered insufferably brash. Now that I have money and power that same quality passes for strength—rugged strength.

TOWER

I still call it brash!

FROBISHER

The girls like it!

MRS. TOWER

What I like about Allan is his innate vulgarity, don't you, Willie?

J A N E

FROBISHER

As my father was a blacksmith and my grandfather an indentured servant, I'm under no obligation to be refined. Everybody loves women secretly. Everybody is polygamous—secretly; I am—openly.

MRS. TOWER

Allan's perpetually in love with someone. I find it very tiresome.

TOWER

Not in love, Millicent. That implies a spiritual quality that Allan lacks. It's simply that he is frightened by what the doctors call "the atrophy of disuse."

FROBISHER

(*Chuckles*)

You're right, Willie. "Never stop" is my motto. Once you stop—you're done for. When I go to these boring public dinners and hear these great swells spout their hollow abstractions—I've done it myself—have to in my position—as I look around the room at their pious expressions I think: "What women are they really thinking of?" I always know who *I'm* thinking of.

TOWER

How crowded your brain must be!

FROBISHER

Teeming!

JANE

TOWER

You know, Millicent, I should like to devise a coat of arms for Allan: all the actresses in London "couchant" and he over them, brandishing a limp sword of papier mâché.

MRS. TOWER

Willie, you're wicked.

FROBISHER

He's jealous, that's all.

TOWER

How's your asthma?

FROBISHER

I rise above it. I say, Willie! While you're doing nothing, why don't you go to work for me? Biggest circulation in London, you know.

TOWER

I know your circulation is big, Allan, but can it read?

JANE

(Coming down stairs)

Millie, was that my young man?

(She has changed to a black dress of a style belonging to the early 1900's. Her hair is parted in the middle, covering her ears. She has a narrow black ribbon tied around it.)

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(Terribly discommoded by JANE's existence—presenting)

Jane, this is Lord Frobisher. Allan, this is my sister-in-law, Mrs. Fowler.

JANE

(Rather primly, she disapproves of him)

How do you do?

FROBISHER

(He rather squints at the apparition of JANE; he has no taste, unlike TOWER, for that sort of thing)

I'm very well thank you.

JANE

Why do you stare at me?

FROBISHER

Do I? Sorry.

JANE

We, at home, consider it rude to stare.

FROBISHER

(His back up a bit)

Stared! Of course I stared. When she came down I thought it was Queen Victoria. Now by God I see I was right.

MRS. TOWER

(Idiotically)

My sister-in-law lives in Liverpool.

JANE

FROBISHER

That explains it. (*Moves toward JANE, still staring at her as though he were in a zoo*) I've just bought a paper there.

JANE

Yes, I know you have. The *Star*. Why did you buy it? It's a wretched newspaper. We never take it.

FROBISHER

I'm afraid you're in a minority, Mrs. Fowler.

TOWER

(*Enjoying himself*)

Hasn't Allan improved it?

JANE

Not a bit. Before he bought it, it was quite easy not to read it. Now Lord Frobisher has filled it full of the most sensational photographs and it is really very difficult not to look at it.

FROBISHER

(*Chuckles*)

That effect, dear, dear Mrs. Fowler is not uncalculated.

JANE

(*Blandly*)

I am sure, Lord Frobisher, that that is true of most of your effects. (*Turns to MRS. TOWER*) But where is my young man?

J A N E

FROBISHER

Is your son as original as you are, Mrs. Fowler?

JANE

I have no son. I am referring to my fiancé.

MRS. TOWER

(*Simply floundering*)

It's a happy event, Allan. Jane has just announced her engagement.

FROBISHER

My congratulations!

JANE

Thank you.

FROBISHER

Is it Prince Albert?

JANE

(*With benign mildness—to MRS. TOWER*)

It amazes me, Millie, that you could have left a mature man like my dear William for an elderly adolescent like Lord Frobisher!

(FROBISHER *glares*. MRS. TOWER *totters*. Only TOWER is in ecstasy.)

TOWER

Allan, my dear sister-in-law has a gift for epitaph. "Elderly Adolescent!" That will be written on your tombstone. (*He sinks on his knees before JANE*) Millicent, will you remarry me so that I may once again be Jane's brother-in-law?



JANE

MRS. TOWER

Don't be absurd, Willie.

JANE

(Blushing a little)

Do get up, William. But I think you should remarry Millie. I shall bless the reunion.

WILSON

(Enters and announces)

Mr. Gilbert Dabney!

JANE

(Rises, but TOWER still holds her hand)

My young man! Gilbert . . .

(GILBERT is about thirty, slight, tallish, attractive, with a deprecatory, half-humorous, tentative manner that is very engaging. GILBERT sees TOWER on his knees before JANE.)

GILBERT

(With mock consternation)

What, Jane? Already?

JANE

(A little disconcerted)

Get up, William!

GILBERT

I hadn't expected this sort of thing till *after* we were married.

JANE

JANE

It's only my brother-in-law. He's been to Africa and he's going to India.

GILBERT

(Easily)

Well, that explains it.

(TOWER finally lets go of JANE'S hand, sits back on his heels, contemplating the phenomenon.)

JANE

Millie, this is my young man. I do hope you like him.

GILBERT

How do you do?

(But MRS. TOWER is so bouleversé she can only make her lips move in greeting.)

JANE

And this . . . *(Turns and sees TOWER still on his knees)*
Oh, get up, William! *(She helps him rise)* And this is William Tower, Millie's ex-husband. He's like one of the family.

GILBERT

How do you do?

(He and TOWER shake hands.)

TOWER

(In seventh heaven)

I'm singularly happy.

JANE

JANE

(*Indicating FROBISHER with a faint asperity*)

And this is Lord Frobisher.

GILBERT

(*Catches JANE's attitude and shares it*)

How do you do? (FROBISHER is transfixed) Why do you stare? Is my tie on wrong or something?

JANE

Don't mind him, Gilbert. Lord Frobisher hasn't learned, evidently, that it is rude to stare.

MRS. TOWER

(*Finally finding speech*)

Jane! Really . . .

JANE

(*Looks at her, concerned*)

What's the matter, Millie? You have an unusually high color.

MRS. TOWER

(*Gasps*)

I probably put on too much rouge.

JANE

Oh, is it rouge? I thought it was natural. Otherwise, I shouldn't have mentioned it. (*Gives GILBERT a shy smile*) You know, Gilbert, Millie and I were at school together.

GILBERT

(*Out to captivate MRS. TOWER*)

So you told me. You know, Mrs. Tower, Jane sets such

JANE

store by you—I have been quite tense about meeting you. I'm so afraid that if you don't approve of me Jane will drop me. So please approve.

MRS. TOWER

(Off her social balance for once)

It's a bit early . . .

GILBERT

(Smiles at her)

It may be worse later. *(To FROBISHER)* It's so nice to like people right off—from the beginning, don't you think? It may be the only chance to really enjoy them. *(But FROBISHER is still in aspic)* Yes . . . *(He gives up there and turns to MRS. TOWER)* After that, things are apt to get a bit frayed, don't you think?

MRS. TOWER

(Trembling, venomous)

Well, there is a certain disparity of age between you!

TOWER

Shall you be in London long, Jane? While you're here I want to see as much of you as possible.

JANE

We are going to Italy for our honeymoon.

TOWER

(To GILBERT)

Do you expect to be away long?

JANE

GILBERT

I have arranged with the office to stay away for two months.

JANE

It will be such a treat for him. He's never had more than a fortnight's holiday before.

MRS. TOWER

Why not?

GILBERT

I've never been able to afford it.

MRS. TOWER

(Putting volumes into the exclamation)

Ah!

TOWER

Millicent, did you say "Ah"?

MRS. TOWER

(With asperity)

Yes, I did and I meant every word of it.

GILBERT

(To TOWER)

Jane hoped I would make a good impression on her family. Am I succeeding, do you think?

TOWER

You're succeeding with me all right.

JANE

FROBISHER

(He has had enough)

Well, thank you, Millicent for a most diverting afternoon.

MRS. TOWER

I've hardly seen you at all.

FROBISHER

I'll ring you tomorrow. You must get your sister-in-law over her prejudice against me. By the way, Willie, I'm seeing your play tonight and taking Muriel Kerr to supper afterwards. Won't you join us? It'll be a big thrill for Muriel to meet the author.

TOWER

Thank you very much but unfortunately I'm busy.

MRS. TOWER

It's Muriel now, is it?

FROBISHER

I hope it will be.

TOWER

(Eager to whip things up)

You know, Jane, Lord Frobisher is the most expert philanthropist in London.

JANE

(Objectively)

At his age? Is it becoming?

JANE

TOWER

(Keeping the fire going)

He has a sort of vintage boyishness, don't you think?

FROBISHER

(Nettled to open attack)

Your sense of decorum is extremely acute, Mrs. Fowler. You are very critical of other people's indulgences. Doesn't it—in the circumstances—*(He looks from her to GILBERT)* show a lack of humor?

JANE

(With dignity, takes GILBERT'S hand)

Gilbert and I are about to be *married*, Lord Frobisher.

FROBISHER

(Helpless)

I give up!

TOWER

(Simmering with delight)

This is the second time I've seen Allan so frustrated.

JANE

(Not above wanting instances)

Really? What was the first time?

TOWER

The first time was when he was staying with me in my villa in the South of France. A highly respectable American lady novelist was staying with me also. Allan came down to the swimming pool stark naked. She didn't bat an eyelash!

JANE

JANE
(*Gravely*)

I hope she managed to conceal her disappointment.

TOWER
(*With mock disapproval*)

Now that, Jane, quite literally, is hitting below the belt!

FROBISHER
(*Can take no more*)

Good-bye, Millicent. Another ten minutes with your sister-in-law would permanently undermine my confidence.

(*He goes out.*)

JANE
(*Reflectively*)

Millie, dear, how could you have made such a mistake?
To have abandoned my dear William . . .

MRS. TOWER
(*She can endure no more*)

Mistake! You talk about mistakes!

TOWER
Jane has an acute sense of values, Millicent.

MRS. TOWER
(*Savage*)

Willie! I want to talk to Jane.

JANE
What are we doing now?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Willie, take Mr. Dabney into the library.

TOWER

But I'd much rather stay here and deepen my acquaintance with Jane.

JANE

We shall have plenty of time for that, William. You go along. I promise to tell you everything that Millie says.

TOWER

On that condition I will. (*To GILBERT*) Come along, young man.

GILBERT

(*As he starts to go with TOWER into the library*)
Stiff upper lip, Jane.

TOWER

(*To GILBERT*)

How do you feel on the eve of your great adventure?

GILBERT

Well, I've been all through it once before, you know.

TOWER

Have you, really? Well, come in here and tell me all about it.

(*They go, closing library door after them.*)

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(As soon as they're gone)

Jane! Are you crazy? What makes you want to marry this young man?

JANE

Partly because he won't take "no" for an answer.

MRS. TOWER

And why do you suppose he wants to marry you?

JANE

I amuse him.

MRS. TOWER

Amuse him!

JANE

So he keeps telling me.

MRS. TOWER

Where did you meet him, anyway?

JANE

I advertised for him.

MRS. TOWER

Oh! In Cupid's Column, I suppose.

JANE

No, in the *Times*. I advertised for a young architect, without an expensive reputation, to re-do my house in Liverpool. And Gilbert came.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

He's penniless and you're rich. You can't be such a fool as not to see that he's marrying you for your money!

JANE

I don't think he is, you know. I think he's very fond of me.

MRS. TOWER

You're an old woman, Jane.

JANE

I'm the same age as you, Millie.

MRS. TOWER

I've never let myself go. I'm very young for my age. No one would take me for more than forty. But even I wouldn't think of marrying a boy twenty years younger than I am.

JANE

Wouldn't you?

MRS. TOWER

Do you mean to say it's possible for a young man to fall in love with a woman old enough to be his mother? Oh, now really, Jane, I always thought you were a sensible woman. You're the last person in the world I should have ever thought likely to fall in love with a boy.

JANE

But I'm not in love with him. I've told him that.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

If you're not in love with him, why do you want to marry him?

JANE

(Calmly)

I've been a widow a very long time. I thought I'd like a change.

MRS. TOWER

If you want to marry for the sake of being married, why don't you marry someone of your own age?

JANE

No man of my own age has asked me. In fact, no one has asked me at all except Gilbert and he had to ask me five times.

(She chuckles.)

MRS. TOWER

(Increasingly furious)

Don't laugh, Jane. Really, you must be out of your mind. *(Begins to weep suddenly)* It's dreadful!

JANE

(Regards her with composure)

Don't cry, Millie.

MRS. TOWER

(Into her handkerchief)

You're going to be so dreadfully unhappy.

JANE

JANE

I don't think we are, you know. We've talked it over very thoroughly. He was married once before to a girl of his own age.

MRS. TOWER

He's certainly going to the other extreme.

JANE

She ran away from him to marry a rich American. She made him very unhappy. He told me so.

MRS. TOWER

How much money has he persuaded you to settle on him?

JANE

I wanted to settle a thousand a year on him, but he wouldn't hear of it.

MRS. TOWER

He's more cunning than I thought.

JANE

Millie dear, you do misunderstand him.

MRS. TOWER

I am too upset to go on. I must look a fright. I must go and restore my face, if possible, to it's original condition. We'll talk it all over in the morning.

JANE

I'm afraid that won't be convenient. Gilbert and I are going to be married in the morning.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

You're hopeless.

JANE

Millie dear, I'm so fond of you.

MRS. TOWER

Don't be emotional. I've got people coming to dinner.
(*Opens door to library*) Mr. Dabney, you can come out now.
I want to talk to Willie.

(*She goes into library, leaving door open.*)

GILBERT

(*Enters from library, closes the door*)

Jane! Why, Jane darling, we seem to have caused a sensation! (*Takes her hands*) It's very agreeable—being a sensation.

JANE

(*Smiles somewhat soberly*)

I hadn't realized, till I saw the effect on my family, what an odd thing it is, apparently, that we're doing.

GILBERT

The only one who didn't seem to mind a bit is Mr. Tower.

JANE

He enjoyed it because it made the others uncomfortable.

GILBERT

Of course! How shrewd you are, Jane!

J A N E

JANE

They think I've exercised a hypnotic spell over you. Have I?

GILBERT

Of course you have. The vampire of Liverpool. The Lorelei of the Mersey!

JANE

You know, they make me feel as if . . .

GILBERT

How do they make you feel?

JANE

As if instead of marrying you—I should adopt you! It's obvious they think you're marrying me for my money.

GILBERT

I'm sure they do. Oh, Jane, what fun we shall have!

JANE

You have one more chance, you know.

GILBERT

For what?

JANE

To get out of it. Tomorrow will be too late.

GILBERT

I'll wait till it's too late.

JANE

JANE

Are you quite sure?

GILBERT

Perfectly!

JANE

You know—I have told you—that although I couldn't be more fond of anyone than I am of you—I am not in love with you.

GILBERT

(With mock conceit)

That's because you only know me superficially. As you become more familiar with the beauty and the depth of my character, you will gradually fall madly in love with me.

JANE

(Fondly pats his cheek)

Oh, Gilbert, you are sweet!

GILBERT

With your directness and my subtlety we'll strike a perfect balance.

JANE

We are quite different, you know.

GILBERT

I know we are. That's the fun of it!

JANE

I am mature and deliberate. You are young and impulsive. Therefore, I think we ought to make it clear at the outset . . .

JANE

GILBERT

Yes, Jane, clear away.

JANE

I think we should have it understood between us that if either of us wants our freedom—the other will put no obstacle in the way of his getting it.

GILBERT

(Quite misunderstanding her)

You don't really believe in my love for you, do you?

JANE

Yes, I do.

GILBERT

Then why do you want this ridiculous proviso?

JANE

(Demurely)

Well, it works both ways, doesn't it? I said: if *either* of us wants our freedom . . .

GILBERT

(Persists in his misinterpretation)

You're the most gallant creature in the world! Of course, you shall have your proviso. But if I ever take advantage of it, it will mean that I have lost entirely the little good sense that I flatter myself I have.

JANE

I think we have protected ourselves in every way possible, don't you?

JANE

GILBERT

Yes, vampire.

JANE

(Moved, utters a little prayer)

Bless us!

GILBERT

(Equally moved, echoes her)

Amen!

JANE

(After a moment)

Shall we go for a little stroll in the garden? It's spring in the garden. I'd like to show you Millie's roses.

GILBERT

(Rises, takes her hand and leads her to French doors)

I'd adore to see Millie's roses. I'd prefer it, frankly, to seeing Millie.

JANE

You mustn't say that, Gilbert. She is my dear husband's only sister.

GILBERT

(As they stop at garden door and face each other)

Well, she won't be by this time tomorrow. Oh, Jane, what fun we shall have!

JANE

Yes, Gilbert—I have no doubt—we shall have fun together!

JANE

(Arms locked, looking tenderly into each other's eyes, they go out into the garden. After a moment MRS. TOWER comes in from the library, followed immediately by TOWER. She goes to French doors as he goes to liquor table and pours himself a glass of sherry.)

TOWER

Well, what's become of the young couple?

MRS. TOWER

Don't joke, Willie. It's not funny.

TOWER

Well, half of them is a young couple, anyway.

MRS. TOWER

You're enjoying this far too much, Willie. It's a tragedy. That's what it is—a tragedy!

TOWER

Why? They seem very fond of each other.

MRS. TOWER

Fond! Fond! You don't think he's marrying her for anything but her money, do you?

TOWER

Well, if it doesn't work out you'll at least have the consolation of saying: "I told you so."

MRS. TOWER

Jane! Can you imagine! So old and dowdy and dull!

JANE

TOWER

Are you quite sure she's dull?

MRS. TOWER

What else is she?

TOWER

What she does say is very much to the point.

MRS. TOWER

Nonsense! I've never heard her make a joke in my life! Well, Willie, how much do you give it? Six months? I give it six months at most. (*With a twinge of jealousy*) Fancy—finding a young man like that in Liverpool! And she advertised for him! Would you believe that Willie—she advertised!

TOWER

Well, why don't you do the same, Millicent? In one of Allan's papers. I'm sure he'd give you a reduced rate.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, Willie—you're maddening! (*She hits him with her floppy straw hat and walks away from him. She is out of sorts with everything*) So is Jane! So is everybody!

TOWER *sips his sherry happily as the
curtain falls.*

ACT TWO

ACT TWO

Scene: The same.

Time: Six months later. March, 1938. Late afternoon.

At Rise: WILSON shows in TOWER. TOWER looks around the room. He picks up a copy of Punch and is glancing at it when MRS. TOWER comes in from the garden in gardening-hat and carrying large shears.

MRS. TOWER

Willie! When did you get back?

TOWER

This morning.

(They kiss lightly.)

MRS. TOWER

After six months you drop in as casually as though you'd just taken a stroll in St. James's Park. Did you have a good time in India?

TOWER

Fascinating.

MRS. TOWER

(Enviously)

You always have a wonderful time, don't you, Willie?

TOWER

You don't exactly wear a hair shirt yourself, Millicent. You're looking lovely.

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

I don't feel lovely. I'm in a state.

TOWER

What about?

MRS. TOWER

Everything.

TOWER

How is Ann?

MRS. TOWER

She's one of the things I'm in a state about.

TOWER

What's wrong?

MRS. TOWER

It's that awful Peter Crewe.

TOWER

Is that still on?

MRS. TOWER

On? It's incessant. She might just as well be married to him for all the attention she pays anyone else.

TOWER

Ann usually runs through them faster than that.

MRS. TOWER

(As if it were a personal affront)

He's actually had a book of poems published.

JANE

TOWER

Has he? Have you read it?

MRS. TOWER

I couldn't *read* it but I've looked at it. The critics all raved about it but personally I couldn't make head or tail of it. Not a rhyme to hang on to.

TOWER

What else are you in a state about?

MRS. TOWER

Well, do you remember my sister-in-law whom you met the last time you were here?

TOWER

Oh, yes—that quaint, elderly frump from Liverpool. Of course I do.

MRS. TOWER

(*Bitterly*)

Yes, well, that quaint elderly frump from Liverpool is now the reigning social success of London.

TOWER

Nonsense!

MRS. TOWER

Wait till you see, Willie, wait till you see. You're going to get the surprise of your life.

TOWER

Am I? I'm scarcely likely to meet her.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

She and Gilbert are both living here.

TOWER

That marriage still on? I remember you gave it six months.

MRS. TOWER

I've taken an extension.

TOWER

As it's lasted so long, maybe it will last forever.

MRS. TOWER

I said it wouldn't last and I still say it won't last. It's contrary to human nature.

TOWER

Human nature is often contrary.

MRS. TOWER

There's something very mysterious going on between Allan and Jane.

TOWER

Allan? I shouldn't think Jane was in the least Allan's dish.

MRS. TOWER

Perhaps he's changed his diet. They quarrel all the time. God knows what about.

J A N E

TOWER

That sounds very ominous. And Gilbert . . .

MRS. TOWER

He's bound to leave her. It's inevitable. He's such a charming, attractive young man.

TOWER

Why are they living here?

MRS. TOWER

They're staying here till Jane's house is ready. She's taken a long lease on a house in Belgrave Square and Gilbert is redecorating it for her.

TOWER

I must say it's very generous of you to have them here.

MRS. TOWER

You don't know, Willie, you don't know.

TOWER

What don't I know?

MRS. TOWER

Not only has Gilbert redecorated Jane's house. He's re-upholstered Jane!

TOWER

Really?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Really. It's galling to think that people who never came here before now come here on account of Jane! She's become a sort of fad.

TOWER

Really!

MRS. TOWER

Really! Cabinet ministers—royalty—film stars, even! And the extraordinary thing is they all think she's so amusing.

TOWER

People can never resist those who make them laugh, my dear Millicent.

MRS. TOWER

I don't think she's a bit funny. Of course I laugh when I see other people doing it because I don't want to appear a perfect fool. But I'm never in the least amused.

TOWER

You always liked notorious people. Just relax and enjoy it. Gather ye rosebuds while ye may!

MRS. TOWER

I do, but I resent it. Every rosebud. I can't wait for Jane's house to be ready so she can pack up and get out of here. And the outrageous things she says—they take your breath away!

TOWER

For instance?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Last week I gave a lunch party and Lady St. Earth was here. Everybody was talking about Eden's resignation over that nonsense in Ethiopia. As if anybody cared about Ethiopia . . .

(She pops some birdseed in to her canaries.)

TOWER

Well?

MRS. TOWER

Well, Lady St. Earth was saying that Eden was like a servant who quits because he knows he's going to be kicked out anyway. And what do you think Jane said?

TOWER

I can't imagine.

MRS. TOWER

In that maddeningly innocent little voice of hers, I was horrified to hear her say: "Perhaps, Lady St. Earth"—I couldn't believe my ears—"perhaps, Lady St. Earth, you understand a servant's mentality better than you do Mr. Eden's!" (TOWER *laughs*) It's no laughing matter, Willie. Lady St. Earth was out of the house in five minutes and hasn't been back since.

TOWER

I know Lady St. Earth and you should be grateful to Jane.

MRS. TOWER

It can't go on much longer. There's bound to be a blow-up.

JANE

TOWER

I hope to be present when it occurs!

MRS. TOWER

And when it does I hope you'll assume your responsibilities and do something about Ann. But instead of that, I suppose you'll be popping off to Afghanistan at any moment.

TOWER

Tibet.

MRS. TOWER

What?

TOWER

(In the interest of accuracy)

I am not going to Afghanistan. I am going to Tibet.

MRS. TOWER

While you're playing around with all those lamas . . .
(TOWER *laughs*) What are you laughing at?

TOWER

My dear Millicent, the lamas are rather exclusive. You can't play around with them.

MRS. TOWER

Well, while you are playing around with whatever they have in Tibet, I suppose I shall be left here wrestling with Ann's problems. Oh, dear, life *is* difficult!

JANE

TOWER

It's practically impossible. The moment you're born you're done for.

MRS. TOWER

(One of her abrupt transitions)

Jane prophesies that you and I will remarry.

TOWER

(Interested)

Does she?

MRS. TOWER

(Tantalizing)

Yes. Do you believe in prophecy?

TOWER

(Laconic)

I believe in free will.

MRS. TOWER

In your stories people are always swallowed up by a destiny they can't escape.

TOWER

I never read my stories.

MRS. TOWER

(Still in pursuit)

Jane says if you're not careful you'll let yourself in for a lonely old age. Aren't you afraid of that?

JANE

TOWER

My dear Millicent, I do not have to wait for old age to know loneliness. I have known it since I was a child.

MRS. TOWER

(Frustrated)

I can't cope with you.

TOWER

(With a charming smile)

Isn't it nice you don't have to?

MRS. TOWER

The truth is you're vindictive. Sometimes I think you took advantage of the incident with Allan to leave me high and dry.

TOWER

(With a glance around the charming room)

Many people wouldn't mind being left high and dry in these surroundings.

MRS. TOWER

You're such a materialist! You worship success.

TOWER

(Quiet but accurate in aim)

If my worship were unrequited, you might be even more bitter.

MRS. TOWER

Let's drop the subject.

JANE

TOWER

With happiness.

(GILBERT comes down the stairs, dressed in tails.)

GILBERT

Oh, Millicent . . . (Sees TOWER, is pleased) Oh, hello, Mr. Tower!

TOWER

The bridegroom!

(They shake hands.)

GILBERT

I'm not a bridegroom any more. I'm a settled married man.

TOWER

Where is the bride? I'm longing to see the bride.

GILBERT

She's upstairs changing. Do you know how she spent her afternoon? I invited her to come round and see what I'm planning for the old house in Belgrave Square. Do you know what she preferred to do?

TOWER

What?

GILBERT

To go off with your daughter and her boy friend to see an exhibition of modern art. Can you imagine spending an afternoon observing those horrors? Those detached eyes swimming in tomato sauce, those curves copulating with angles?

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(Touching herself up at the glass wall)

Gilbert, don't be so vivid!

GILBERT

I must say, Millicent, if I could be annoyed with Jane, I should be at this moment.

MRS. TOWER

Why?

GILBERT

I've just been round to see Lady St. Earth. You know I was going to do her new house for her in Park Lane. Well, it's off!

MRS. TOWER

(Pleased)

I should think it would be.

GILBERT

Jane's unfortunate remark to her cost me an important commission.

MRS. TOWER

Why don't you shut Jane up?

GILBERT

That's a tall order. *(With a note of petulance not wasted on TOWER)* Well, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(*With melting sympathy, to GILBERT*)

You'd think as she was lucky enough to capture a husband as gifted as you are, she'd do all she could to further your career—not to antagonize your prospects. I think it's outrageous!

TOWER

How considerate of you, Millicent, to point it out! Always thinking of others.

MRS. TOWER

Of course *you'd* sympathize with Jane. You're both such egotists. (*To GILBERT*) I don't think they know how talented you are! (*To TOWER*) You should see his plans for the new house, Willie. They're brilliant.

GILBERT

(*To MRS. TOWER as he surveys the room*)

I'd like to do this one over for you some day.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, well—when Willie writes his next best-seller, you can.

TOWER

You put a premium on failure.

MRS. TOWER

And, Gilbert, when you do start disciplining Jane, you might ask her to stop encouraging that awful Peter Crewe to think that my daughter—yes, and your daughter, too, Willie—though you won't acknowledge it . . .

JANE

TOWER

I have never denied my share in Ann's paternity. Is there something I don't know?

MRS. TOWER

It's easy to laugh. Most convenient. I'll go up and see what's happened to Ann. (*To TOWER*) It's cook's day off. You might take me out to dinner.

TOWER

I'll be delighted. (*To GILBERT*) Will you and Jane join us?

GILBERT

I'd love to and I'm sure Jane would, too. We're going to the opera afterwards.

MRS. TOWER

(*With malice*)

And while you're about it, Gilbert, you might invite Lady St. Earth. I'm sure she'd love it.

GILBERT

Please don't rub it in, Millicent.

MRS. TOWER

I must say, Gilbert, you have the patience of Job—and you're far more attractive.

(*She goes upstairs.*)

TOWER

Congratulations, Gilbert—on being more attractive than Job.

JANE

GILBERT

Thank you. (*Goes up to liquor table and pours a drink*)
It's very nice to see you again, Mr. Tower.

TOWER

Thank you.

GILBERT

(*Indicating glass*)

How about you?

TOWER

No, I think I'll stick with sherry, if you don't mind.

GILBERT

Jane and I have never forgotten how sympathetic you were on the day we first burst the bombshell on the family. I must say I was glad you were here that day.

TOWER

So was I.

GILBERT

(*Lifts glass, toasts him*)

Cheers!

TOWER

Cheers!

(*In this scene TOWER probes GILBERT. He is curious about GILBERT and JANE. GILBERT senses that he is being quizzed, rather enjoys it.*)

JANE

TOWER

May I say . . .

GILBERT

Anything at all.

TOWER

May I say that I think it is very sensible of you to have married a woman older than yourself? One of the wisest of men, Benjamin Franklin, advised it.

GILBERT

Did he?

TOWER

Yes. He lists the advantages.

GILBERT

What does he say they are?

TOWER

Well, as I remember, he says that making a young wife unhappy is apt to make her bitter, whereas making an older one . . .

GILBERT

Yes?

TOWER

Is certain to make her grateful! Is Jane grateful?

GILBERT

We're both grateful. We're very happy.

JANE

TOWER

(Puts scalpel in a little deeper)

No rift in the lute?

GILBERT

Not a rift.

TOWER

You're luckier than most married people. Well, Gilbert, you have confounded the prophets who said your marriage couldn't possibly last.

GILBERT

Only sensible thing I've ever done.

TOWER

(Taking a different tack)

I've been wondering what it is that Jane's peculiar gift consists of.

GILBERT

Can't be defined. It's just—er—Jane . . .

TOWER

I should like to be a little more precise than that. She is not given, thank heaven, to epigram. Nor does she get off brilliant repartees. Do you know what I think it is?

GILBERT

Well—as I say, it's just . . .

JANE

TOWER

(Coming in quickly)

Don't say that again, Gilbert, it's not scientific.

GILBERT

Sorry.

TOWER

The explanation is very simple. She just tells the truth. And in our world this is so unusual that people think it's outrageously funny!

GILBERT

(With a hint of bitterness)

Jane certainly doesn't mind telling the truth.

TOWER

It was very thoughtless of her, wasn't it, to cost you an important commission for the dubious luxury of being honest with Lady St. Earth?

GILBERT

Yes. You see, in my profession connections are everything. I have become ambitious. In a world of opportunities, I am an opportunist.

TOWER

You will go far.

GILBERT

I have. I shall go farther.

JANE

TOWER

How very odd it is to encounter a completely happy man.
(*Delicately*) In every way?

GILBERT

(*Knows what he means, firmly*)

In every way.

TOWER

I see.

GILBERT

I find Jane all-sufficient. She is adorable and amusing. In fact, she is all I could possibly want.

TOWER

More and more you sound like Benjamin Franklin.

GILBERT

If that is so, then I am prepared to accept your estimate of him as a wise man.

(JANE comes down. It is a new JANE. Her iron-gray hair is cut very short and clustered thickly round her well-shaped head in tight curls. She has made no attempt at youth; she wears very little make-up and her face looks remarkably fresh and clear-skinned. She wears an audacious evening-dress; on anyone else it would have almost the appearance of fancy-dress; on JANE it somehow achieves the inevitable simplicity of nature.)

JANE

JANE

William! I had no idea you were back. It is so nice to see you. Oh, I am delighted.

TOWER

(*Amazed at her transformation*)

Jane! Is this my Jane?

JANE

Of course it is. We're going to the opera.

TOWER

(*To JANE*)

Millicent tells me that London regards you as a humorist. Were you a humorist in Liverpool, Jane?

JANE

Ah, but, William, Liverpool is much more difficult to impress than London.

TOWER

Why?

JANE

In Liverpool they are not afraid of being depressed. It is their birthright. But in London they are so eager to laugh that they meet you more than half way. They think just coming from Liverpool is funny!

TOWER

Now you mention it, Jane, it has a decided comic aspect.

JANE

GILBERT

By the way, Jane, we have to decide about the week-end. We have four invitations already.

JANE

Gilbert can never resist an invitation.

GILBERT

No. I'd like to accept them all. Here's one from Lord Duffield.

JANE

That's horses.

TOWER

(*To JANE*)

How do you get on with the horsey set?

JANE

They're rather simple. I talk to them about easy books and I pass for an intellectual.

GILBERT

Anson Dykes wants us too.

TOWER

The effervescent historian. How do you get on with him, Jane?

JANE

I simply let him bubble. He is dazzled with his own identity.

JANE

GILBERT

(To TOWER)

Anson's crazy about Jane. He's dedicating his new book to her. He tells everybody she's brilliant.

JANE

He thinks me brilliant because I never interrupt him.

GILBERT

(*Flipping another invitation in his hand*)

Lord Shillinghurst is most anxious. He's got a lovely place. Let's go to him.

JANE

He *is* a problem.

TOWER

Why?

JANE

He is a Labor peer, and he is very self-conscious because he has never been a workingman.

GILBERT

By the way, Jane, I've been around to Belgrave Square today and got a lot of new ideas. I've been working like mad on the plans. I'm dying to show you. Why don't you pick up with Tower where you left off while I go up and get them? May I?

JANE

All right.

GILBERT

When I first saw you two together Tower was on his knees before you.

JANE

TOWER

I still am.

JANE

Thank you, William.

GILBERT

None of that, now. Remember, I am very jealous, very possessive!

(He goes upstairs.)

JANE

Well, William!

TOWER

Well, Jane! For a moment I didn't know you.

JANE

I knew you at once.

TOWER

But I haven't changed my tailor. May I say that your shoulders are beautiful?

JANE

(Glancing down at them impersonally)

Wasn't it clever of Gilbert to see their possibilities?

TOWER

You are unique, and you are radiantly happy. Aren't you?

JANE

JANE

I must tell you, William—since our last meeting I have read you. Millie has all your books and I have plowed through every one of them.

TOWER

I don't care for the expression "plowed."

JANE

I am a slow reader. No, what I meant to convey was that I shouldn't try to pretend to you because I can see from your books that you understand women too well.

TOWER

Does that mean that you are going to confess to me?

JANE

Only partially. One thing I have discovered—the young have no conversation.

TOWER

I have just been talking to Gilbert and he is extremely glib.

JANE

He has no silences.

TOWER

And yet you seem radiantly happy.

JANE

I am. I've been enjoying myself no end. It's very different from my life in Liverpool.

JANE

TOWER

Do I sense a reservation? Is there a rift in the lute?

JANE

If there is, it isn't Gilbert's fault.

TOWER

Is it yours?

JANE

There is something, you know, William, about the difference in ages. We can learn to speak the language of the young, but we don't really understand it.

TOWER

Millicent tells me you get on well with Peter.

JANE

Peter is more adventurous than Gilbert.

TOWER

And are you?

JANE

It seems odd to say it, but I think I am. Gilbert is a dear, but he's a bit . . . a bit . . .

TOWER

Well?

JANE

Old-fashioned.

JANE

TOWER

Why don't you bring him up to date?

JANE

He is very set in his ways. But I am so glad you came at this particular moment. I want to talk to you about Ann.

TOWER

Oh, yes. Millicent takes a poor view of your friendship with Peter.

JANE

I know she does. Yet Ann loves Peter and it will last. I must say I love him, too. And, William, you must get to know him.

TOWER

Why doesn't he break loose and marry Ann?

JANE

Because he is already married.

TOWER

(Startled)

What?

JANE

It was a passport marriage. He married this girl in Austria who was being persecuted because of her father's political opinions.

TOWER

Did it work out?

JANE

JANE

No, they caught up with her at the last minute.

TOWER

Where is this girl now?

JANE

In a prison camp. I saw her.

TOWER

How on earth did you manage that?

JANE

Through Lord Frobisher. He arranged it. It was very kind of him because personally he cannot bear me.

TOWER

But Millicent . . .

JANE

She mustn't know. She'd only get hysterical and that wouldn't be at all constructive.

TOWER

What about Ann? Under these circumstances—what possible future has Ann?

JANE

Ann's future is with Peter. It is the only future she wants. And if our plans come off . . .

TOWER

What plans?

JANE

JANE

I don't want to tell you because if they don't come off you'd only laugh at me.

TOWER

I promise you I won't do that.

ANN

(Comes running downstairs)

Father! I'm so sorry I'm late!

TOWER

(Kisses her)

The old must learn to wait upon the young. You're looking lovely, darling.

JANE

(Bluntly)

Ann, I've told him.

ANN

(A bit scared)

About—Peter?

JANE

Yes.

ANN

(Quite tense)

Well, how did he take it?

JANE

Not too badly.

TOWER

Don't exaggerate, Jane. I'm not happy about it at all.

JANE

ANN

Neither am I. But if Peter hadn't done what he did, he wouldn't be Peter.

JANE

Ann, I have a feeling that if you take your father into the garden and have a nice cozy talk with him . . .

ANN

Have you softened him up?

TOWER

I am very much surprised at you, Jane, encouraging my daughter in this extra-marital alliance.

ANN

(*To JANE*)

Doesn't he make it sound sordid?

TOWER

That's exactly what it is, young lady. Even if it is surrounded with a murky cloud of altruism.

(*TOWER and ANN go out into the garden.*)

JANE

(*Goes to the telephone*)

Temple Bar 60 double 6, please. May I speak with Lord Frobisher, please? This is Mrs. Dabney . . . Is this Lord Frobisher's secretary? . . . I was wondering whether Lord Frobisher received my message . . . Oh, he did . . . Oh, he is. Thank you very much. Good-bye.

(*She hangs up. GILBERT has come down during the conversation; he carries a set of blueprints.*)

JANE

GILBERT

What do you want with old Allan? Badgering him about Peter again, to give him a job? You are far too preoccupied with Peter. Far too much. He isn't worth it. I'm just dying to show you those plans. Millicent was most enthusiastic about them.

JANE

Was she?

GILBERT

She said it made her mouth water to think of all the wonderful parties she could give in a house like that. Now come here—relax. I'll take you around from room to room; you won't have to climb a single stair. Personally conducted tour. (GILBERT *spreads plan out on floor and gets down on his knees to show her the details*) Oh, Jane, this is going to be a wonderful setting for you. You see this exquisite circular staircase?

JANE

It's charming. But who will walk up those stairs?

GILBERT

Crowds.

JANE

An endless succession of what William calls notorious people.

GILBERT

The notoriouiser the better!

JANE

JANE
(*Laughs*)

And I'll have to receive them!

GILBERT

Of course you will!

JANE

What will I do if, instead of receiving them, I feel a tremendous impulse to say: "Please go home!"

GILBERT

You'll say it and they'll only laugh and walk right in.

JANE

I may disappoint you Gilbert—and them.

GILBERT

What nonsense! You're the rage of London.

JANE

What does it mean to be the rage of London? To amuse mildly a lot of people one doesn't know very well, whom one doesn't want to know any better, whom one doesn't, in fact, care very much about.

GILBERT

What difference does all that make, as long as it's fun?

JANE

It has been fun.

J A N E

GILBERT

Then what are you quibbling about?

JANE

It's the sort of fun that can't last forever .

GILBERT

Why not?

JANE

I'm not talking only about us, Gilbert. Don't you know what is threatening England today—the world today? Don't you read the papers?

GILBERT

Oh, I read the theatre and society columns once in a while, especially if we're in it. Also the real-estate transactions. Jane, put this nonsense out of your head and let's get back to our house. It's going to be a dream!

JANE

What shall we do in our house?

GILBERT

Well, what does anyone do in a house? Live in it! Entertain! We'll give such wonderful dinner parties that commissions will flock to me. In fact, we'll be so chic that the arrivistes won't feel they've "arreeved" till we've "inveeted" them.

(Chuckles at his joke.)

JANE

JANE

Gilbert! Can it be that you're a bit of a snob?

GILBERT

(Astonished that she should ask)

But of course I am. What else is there to be? I mean, who isn't?

JANE

Peter isn't.

GILBERT

I'm perfectly sure he is. In his own grubby circle, I'm certain he is. Every class has its snobs. It's just a question of scale.

JANE

So all this is enough for you?

GILBERT

Superabundant.

JANE

Don't you think it's possible that one day you will want more?

GILBERT

Why not cross that bridge when we come to it?

JANE

Would that be quite fair to me?

JANE

GILBERT

Fair?

JANE

When the day of bridge-crossing comes you will have most of your life ahead of you. I shan't. I don't want to outstay my welcome. It's a good Liverpool rule of life.

GILBERT

Look—what is all this about?

JANE

I don't want to go on with the plans for our house, Gilbert. I've thought better of it.

GILBERT

You're not serious?

JANE

Yes, I am perfectly serious.

GILBERT

But, Jane . . .

JANE

I must tell you, Gilbert. You are very ingenious, but not even you can demolish time nor the necessities of age. I always used to tell Millie she did too much. And now it's *I* who am doing too much. When I look at those plans of which you're so proud—when I think of the endless succession of dinner parties and supper parties that you are so eagerly anticipating—it's then I think longingly of those

J A N E

evenings in Liverpool, when I sat before my fire in my dressing gown and slippers and read Jane Austen over and over again.

GILBERT

(*Hard*)

You mean you are giving it up then?

JANE

(*Sighs*)

Yes.

GILBERT

This is the second commission you have cost me today!

JANE

The second?

GILBERT

Did you also have to ruin me with Lady St. Earth?

JANE

Have I?

GILBERT

You know very well you have. I was to get a handsome commission from her and that stupid remark you made about Anthony Eden killed it!

JANE

I'm sorry.

JANE

GILBERT

Did you have to go out of your way to insult her?

JANE

I did not go out of my way. She made a silly remark about a brave man who had just done a very courageous thing. I told her I did not share her point of view, that's all.

GILBERT

(*Very hard*)

Well, it cost me a commission!

JANE

I'm so sorry. I had no idea. I'll make it up to you somehow.

GILBERT

(*His voice rises*)

I am perfectly aware and so are you what people think of me—that I married for money. Well, this commission from Lady St. Earth, which incidentally would have led to others, would have made me independent of you financially.

JANE

What alternative had I?

GILBERT

The alternative of keeping quiet.

JANE

Am I to suppress everything I feel for fear of offending

J A N E

those who might offer you commissions? That's a pretty strict censorship. Do you care to exercise it?

GILBERT

There are other topics. Can't you discuss *them*?

JANE

Just now in England—there are no other topics.

GILBERT

Then you might maintain a distinguished silence!

JANE

That's odd. When we first met, my directness—as you called it—seemed to amuse you. It amuses you less, I see.

GILBERT

The trouble with you, Jane, is you've never outgrown the mentality of Liverpool. This is London. Why can't you take your cue from Millicent? She amuses people without antagonizing them.

JANE

Millie is rather like Allan in a way. She's ambitious for a larger circulation.

WILSON

(Comes in and announces)

Lord Frobisher!

JANE

(Gets up to greet LORD FROBISHER)

Allan!

JANE

FROBISHER

Jane!

JANE

How nice of you to come so quickly!

GILBERT

Shall I find Millicent for you?

FROBISHER

I came to see your wife, as a matter of fact. Had to tear myself away from a cocktail party, where I was having a very good time. But when I make a date I keep it.

JANE

You're a very kind man.

FROBISHER

That's a base libel.

TOWER

(Comes in from the garden)

Allan!

FROBISHER

Hello, Willie! Back again?

TOWER

How's the elderly adolescent?

FROBISHER

What a memory you have, Willie—for the wrong things!

J A N E

And what a lucky fellow you are! We stick here in London undergoing crisis after crisis, while you wander over the world having adventures! And getting jolly well paid for it, too. Where was it this time?

GILBERT

He did his laundry in the Ganges.

TOWER

As a matter of fact, I did have an adventure in India. A profound adventure.

FROBISHER

Who was she?

TOWER

You wouldn't in the least understand it, Allan. It was entirely spiritual.

FROBISHER

When anybody talks to me about "spiritual adventures," I always think: "What woman have they been turned down by?"

TOWER

(To JANE)

Isn't he gross?

JANE

(*Smiles warmly at* FROBISHER)

His bark is worse than his bite.

JANE

TOWER

I adore you, Jane. You embrace a cliché with the headlong passion of first love.

JANE

(*Unperturbed*)

So often a cliché expresses exactly what I mean. Why strive for something new?

TOWER

How's your asthma, Allan? (*Explains to JANE*) Allan always has asthma.

JANE

(*To FROBISHER*)

I have a most wonderful cure for it. We used it in Liverpool. I'll have the prescription sent to you.

FROBISHER

Thank you very much.

JANE

As a matter of fact, I think I might have it upstairs. My dear Harry suffered from asthma and we found this formula worked wonders. Gilbert, would you mind going upstairs and looking for it?

GILBERT

No, not if you can give me some idea, however vague, where it is.

JANE

I think it's in that morocco case.

JANE

GILBERT

That morocco case is as big as a vault, but I'll try.

(*He goes upstairs.*)

JANE

Thank you.

FROBISHER

(*Hypochondriac*)

What did your husband die of, Jane?

JANE

(*Placidly*)

Asthma.

(TOWER *laughs.*)

FROBISHER

Says a lot for the remedy, doesn't it?

TOWER

You know, Jane, I've known Allan for nearly thirty years. And he doesn't seem to change a bit. I find it extremely irritating. How do you manage it, Allan?

FROBISHER

I have two devotions—my body and women. I pay infinite attention to the requirements of both.

TOWER

Often, I imagine, simultaneously! (*To JANE*) Don't you think it's shocking, Jane, for an old man like Allan to go on like that?

JANE

JANE

(*Smiles at* FROBISHER)

I don't get an impression of age from Allan at all.

TOWER

Do you know how old he is?

JANE

I never think about people's ages. They either seem young or old to me.

TOWER

How do I seem to you?

JANE

Timeless.

FROBISHER

I believe that if the will to live is strong enough it can surmount anything—even your asthma cure, Jane. I feel immortal.

(*He coughs.*)

TOWER

When you say that, Allan, don't cough.

FROBISHER

One thing I got from the English—the cult of sport.

TOWER

You got a good deal more than that—a considerable fortune and a title.

JANE

FROBISHER

I earned the one and paid for the other.

TOWER

There's a lot to be said for living as you do, Allan. In youth one's body is the perfect valet—obedient, unobtrusive, instantly responsive, a perpetual source of gratification. But at our age one becomes conscious of playing a cat-and-mouse game with it. You have constantly to outwit it. It becomes your enemy. It lies in ambush for you. You dodge, you seek cover, in books, in music, in fantasy, in alcohol. But you always know it's there, constantly sniping at you. And one day, any minute in fact, the invisible marksman will get you.

FROBISHER

Well, my body is still my valet.

WILSON

(Enters, announces)

Mr. Crewe.

JANE

Oh, Peter. You remember Mr. Tower, don't you?

PETER

Yes, of course.

TOWER

Nice to see you again.

(They shake hands.)

JANE

JANE

And this is Lord Frobisher.

PETER

How do you do, sir?

FROBISHER

This the young feller you spoke to me about, Jane?

JANE

Yes.

FROBISHER

I've read some of your things, my boy, in those bloody Socialist papers. You wouldn't do for me at all.

PETER

(As if it were the ultimate compliment)

Thank you very much, sir.

TOWER

(Delighted)

Yes, you're quite right to take that as a compliment, Peter.

PETER

I do appreciate your efforts in my behalf, Jane. But actually the last thing I want to do is to work for Lord Frobisher.

FROBISHER

(Piqued)

Why not?

JANE

PETER

I have read your editorials, sir, and I find that you have an unerring instinct for the wrong conclusions.

FROBISHER

(*To JANE*)

I am quite familiar with this form of attack. He thinks it will provoke me into hiring him. He's mistaken.

PETER

(*To JANE*)

Where's Ann?

JANE

She's in the garden.

PETER

Thank you, Jane. Excuse me, please.

(*He goes out to the garden.*)

FROBISHER

Insufferable brat!

TOWER

But I think he is sincere. I really believe he wouldn't work for you, Allan—which does indicate a kind of taste.

FROBISHER

One day, Willie, your vogue will end and no one will buy your books or produce your plays. It happens to all you fellows. Then you'll be glad to come to me for a job.

JANE

TOWER

Then I'll be glad to ask you for one.

FROBISHER

And then I'll refuse.

TOWER

Then I shall burst into tears.

JANE

And now, William, you can go away.

TOWER

Dear Jane, you are so indirect. You must be awfully anxious to be alone with Allan.

JANE

I am. I adore Allan.

TOWER

I don't know what it is that Jane wants, but fifty pounds she gets it. On guard, Allan, on guard! If you find yourself in a tight corner, one sharp, piercing scream will bring me in from the garden.

(He goes out.)

JANE

(After a moment, to break the ice)

Have you noticed about William's books? They have everything in them but *joie de vivre*. They have wit, they have wisdom, they have pity even, but no joy in just living. Have you noticed that?

JANE

FROBISHER

Don't read him.

JANE

Really?

FROBISHER

He writes far too much and I'm too damn busy.

JANE

I think he's quite an unhappy man.

FROBISHER

I say, do you mind if I pour myself another drink?

JANE

Of course not.

FROBISHER

Thank you.

JANE

Allan, the more I get to know you the more I realize how little people deserve their reputations.

FROBISHER

Why do you say that? What's my reputation?

JANE

Dreadful.

FROBISHER

I deserve it. I enjoy it.

JANE

JANE

I know you enjoy it, but you don't deserve it.

FROBISHER

Don't butter me up. I see through it and I don't like it. Now tell me what it is you want and let me go. I've got a date.

JANE

You always have a date.

FROBISHER

I hope you don't mind.

JANE

Not a bit, but it amazes me how in your long life you've avoided matrimony. How have you done it?

FROBISHER

Really don't know how, to tell you the truth. Somehow all the women I've ever been attracted to were already married—or else they were actresses.

JANE

Two interesting groups! Why does a man like you take pride in so many conquests?

FROBISHER

(Tries to answer honestly)

Well—one wants constantly the assurance that one is still attractive.

J A N E

JANE

There must be another reason. The quantity test applied to love . . .

FROBISHER

What do you mean?

JANE

It must be easier to conquer many than to constantly reconquer one. There, one cannot rely on novelty. It's much more of a test, don't you think?

FROBISHER

Perhaps too much of one!

(*Drinks.*)

JANE

(*With finality*)

There's no doubt about it. Men are lazy!

FROBISHER

Lazy? I go to a lot of trouble just to be lazy!

JANE

(*Involuntarily*)

Poor Allan!

FROBISHER

Why do you say that?

JANE

I find it very touching—that you have never been loved.

JANE

FROBISHER

(Irritated)

I do very well. All the girls I want.

JANE

(Mildly)

I suppose the girls do very well, too.

FROBISHER

(Nettled to a degree)

I find you extremely irritating. I want another drink.

JANE

Do you think it's good for you, at your age, to drink so much?

FROBISHER

(Glowering as he pours himself a stiff one)

Whether it's good for me or not, I'm going to do it!

JANE

Oh, dear! I seem to have antagonized you! And I did so want you in a friendly mood.

FROBISHER

You haven't got the knack. Tell me what it is you want and let me go. *(Looks at his wrist watch)* I'm late now. But I warn you in advance—whatever it is—I am unlikely to grant it. The plain truth is, Jane—I don't particularly care for you.

JANE

I know you don't. That is why it was so kind of you to help me the first time.

J A N E

FROBISHER

(*His curiosity gets the better of him*)

What on earth did you want to visit that prison camp for, anyway?

JANE

A friend of mine is in it. And now, Allan, I want you to do more. I want you to get her out.

FROBISHER

That will be quite a chore.

JANE

Of course it's a chore. That's why I've come to you. You're the only man in England I know who has the energy, the connections and the power to do it.

FROBISHER

(*Flattered*)

Is she pretty? (JANE *laughs*) Somehow it's easier to do things for a woman if she's attractive!

JANE

She is attractive. In fact, she meets all your requirements in a woman. She's lovely, she's an actress and she's married.

FROBISHER

To whom?

JANE

I'll tell you, but I don't want it to go any further.

JANE

FROBISHER

Naturally.

(*Drinks.*)

JANE

She is married to the young man I just introduced you to—
Peter Crewe.

FROBISHER

I thought he was Ann's beau.

JANE

He is. He was never in love with this girl. Now they
both want a divorce so they may go their own ways. This
can't happen unless you get her out.

FROBISHER

(*Mulling it over*)

There are instances where it's been done. Those mighty
Herrenvolk are corrupt as hell. Might cost you a bit of money!

JANE

I am ready to supply all it will cost. It will be so won-
derful of you to do this for me—especially as you don't like
me very much.

FROBISHER

You're pretty cool!

JANE

(*Smiles at him bewitchingly*)

J A N E

At our age we should be cool, don't you think? I mean—
if not at our age—when?

FROBISHER

(Backs away; in a kind of rage of despair)

Damn it all, Jane, you're the only woman I know who
makes me feel I'm on my last legs!

JANE

Nonsense! You're in an excellent state of preservation.

FROBISHER

My God!

(Makes for liquor table again.)

JANE

I do wish you wouldn't drink so much. You are far too
kind and important a man to kill yourself with drink. I know
all about your condition.

FROBISHER

(Pitifully)

My condition was wonderful—till I came here!

JANE

You forget about your asthma. My dear Harry had it and
he never touched a drop.

FROBISHER

(With desperate defiance)

Your dear Harry died and I don't intend to die!

J A N E

JANE

We're all mortal.

FROBISHER

(Turns on her in homicidal rage)

I wish you to know that I came here bounding with vitality, full of the joy of life. Now, thanks to you, I feel something like rigor mortis!

(He sinks down on the settee, afflicted by a morbid hypochondria.)

JANE

I didn't mean to be depressing. It's just that I do think at our age we ought to be careful. There's no reason why you shouldn't live to be a hundred. Unless, of course . . .

FROBISHER

Unless what?

JANE

Unless you should succumb suddenly due to the over-exertion caused by your—laziness.

FROBISHER

(Completely sunk and a bit maudlin, pleading)

Jane.

JANE

(Brightly)

Yes, dear?

JANE

FROBISHER

Jane, would you do something for me?

JANE

(*Co-operative*)

Oh, anything . . .

FROBISHER

(*Sepulchral*)

Would you take charge of my funeral arrangements?

JANE

(*Laughing*)

Oh, that's a long way off.

FROBISHER

I'm sure you'll do it admirably. Admirably.

JANE

Certainly, if you will undertake to do the same for me.

FROBISHER

What the devil are you laughing at?

JANE

I was just thinking—if that regrettable event did occur—what I'd put on your tombstone.

FROBISHER

(*Mutters wildly*)

Still at it—writing my epitaph! Well, let's have it. What is it?

JANE

JANE

Here lies Allan, Lord Frobisher. Died of acute—laziness.

FROBISHER

(*Continues shouting*)

And a good way too. I hope I go that way. I don't ask for better.

JANE

You're the most determined rake I ever met. It must be very exhausting. And I'm not at all sure it's good for your asthma.

FROBISHER

I wish you to know, Mrs. Dabney . . . I wish you to know that I'll go on living as I have been living. Do you mind? I'm far too old to change.

JANE

Are you as old as all that?

FROBISHER

(*At bay*)

Yes, I am!

JANE

I'd hate to be too old to change. Look at me. Look how I've changed.

FROBISHER

I won't do it. I will *not* do it!

JANE

What?

JANE

FROBISHER

What you asked me. I could do it, probably, if I put myself out. But I won't. And do you know why I won't? Because you asked me. I won't do a damn thing about it.

JANE

Oh, yes, you will. Your kind heart will make you—when you are sober.

FROBISHER

(Thrashing about)

And don't you write me any more letters. The next letter you write me I'm going to throw right in the waste-paper basket.

JANE

This one good deed which you are going to do may be the most comforting thing in your life to look back on—your immortality.

FROBISHER

I don't give a good God damn for immortality!

JANE

Don't be blasphemous.

FROBISHER

Not a damn. I live for the moment, do you hear? I don't give a hoot what comes after me. I shan't be here to see it. You can decide in your calm way whether you'll have azaleas or calla lillies at your funeral. But I don't give a damn! At *my* funeral they can have ragweed for all I care. Let them bloody well sneeze their heads off!

JANE

TOWER

(Comes in from garden)

Why, Allan, you're as noisy as one of your newspapers! You're frightening the birds in the garden. They're all atwitter!

JANE

(Apologizes for him)

Allan has had one too many!

TOWER

What outrageous demand have you made on him, Jane? And—I am curious to know—did you get it?

FROBISHER

She did not get it! She will never get it!

MRS. TOWER

(Comes down in full evening dress)

Allan! How nice to see you! No one told me you were here.

TOWER

(With malice)

Allan didn't come to see you, Millicent. He came to see Jane!

MRS. TOWER

(Annoyed)

I hope I'm not in the way.

JANE

He came to see me on business.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

Business? What business could you possibly have with Allan? (*To FROBISHER*) What's the matter, Allan? You look rather down in the mouth.

TOWER

Allan is swimming in alcoholic melancholy. Did you have to drive him to drink, Jane, to get what you wanted?

JANE

Allan is a very good man!

FROBISHER

(*Clinging to his villainy for dear life*)

I am not a good man! I am a bad man!

JANE

I know better.

FROBISHER

Jane, this is my last word to you. If you think you're going to make a do-gooder out of me you are very much mistaken. I'm getting no girls out of prison camps—(*JANE is aghast*) and especially not for you!

MRS. TOWER

Allan, what are you saying?

FROBISHER

(*Points to garden*)

That young bounder's wife . . .

JANE

MRS. TOWER

What do you mean?

FROBISHER

Your daughter's beau. He's got a Czech wife in a prison camp and Jane's moving heaven and earth to get her out! (*Confronts JANE*) Well, I won't get her out. If that young whippersnapper wants her out, why doesn't he do it himself? Why doesn't he storm the Bastille? Maybe he's henpecked and doesn't want her out. This is my last word to you, Mrs. Dabney! Good day!

(He strides to the hall. When he gets there he meets GILBERT, who has come down with the prescription in his hand.)

GILBERT

Here you are, Allan. I've found dear Harry's prescription.

FROBISHER

I no longer need it. Your dear wife has already buried me without it. (*He points to an imaginary plot of ground and is consumed by alcoholic pity as he contemplates his grave-stone*) I'm lying there—right beside Harry!

(He goes out.)

MRS. TOWER

(Recovering her senses)

What did he say? What did he say, Willie? Did he say wife?

J A N E

TOWER

He certainly said wife.

MRS. TOWER

My God! Peter is a bigamist. That's why he wouldn't ask Ann to marry him! Because he is a bigamist!

TOWER

My dear Millicent, if he *were* a bigamist he *would* have asked Ann to marry him.

MRS. TOWER

And you knew it, Jane, you knew it all the time.

JANE

Yes. I'm afraid I did.

MRS. TOWER

I always knew there was something wrong with that young man—right from the beginning. Who knows how many wives he's got? And this one a jailbird, too! Where is he? Let me just . . . Where is he?

TOWER

In the garden with Ann.

MRS. TOWER

A *cad* like that has the effrontery to be in my garden!

TOWER

My dear Millicent, if you're going to start a campaign to eliminate *cads* from gardens, you will have your hands full.

JANE

JANE

Millie, dear . . .

MRS. TOWER

Don't call me that! I see a lot of things now . . . your insulting my best friends . . . your peculiar ways . . . I've had about as much as I can stand. You are my guest . . .

JANE

I am more than your guest. I am your sister-in-law!

MRS. TOWER

That's not enough! (*Turns to GILBERT*) Gilbert! Why don't you exert your marital authority—what's left of it!

GILBERT

I must say, Jane, that I'm entirely on Millicent's side.

JANE

Yes, I know you are.

GILBERT

Moreover, I'm in no mood for the opera. I simply couldn't cope with all those Rhine maidens tonight! (*To TOWER*) You know, Mr. Tower, I'm beginning to think that your friend Benjamin Franklin is vastly over-rated.

TOWER

Why?

GILBERT

He said—they'd be grateful. My God! Grateful!

(*He goes upstairs in a pet.*)

JANE

MRS. TOWER

What did he mean by that? Is Mr. Franklin building a house, too?

TOWER

Not this season, Millicent!

JANE

Millie, dear, I know that you're very angry with me.

MRS. TOWER

That's putting it mildly.

JANE

But I'm going to ask you to do something for me. I know Gilbert has set his heart on going to the opera. It's an opening night and he does so love to be seen. Why don't you make him go with you? You're looking so lovely and you'll see all your friends in the intermission. And when Gilbert comes home he will have forgotten how upset he is with me.

MRS. TOWER

You don't deserve it! (*Abruptly*) Where are the tickets?

JANE

Here.

(*She gives them to her.*)

MRS. TOWER

I don't know why I'm sacrificing myself for you.

JANE

JANE

Because you're an angel.

MRS. TOWER

I suppose that must be it. I must confess, Mr. Richard Wagner gives me the fidgets—but the intermissions *are* rather fun. (*With a twinge of martyrdom*) Still—think what you have to go through to get to them!

(*She goes upstairs.*)

TOWER

Millicent seems to have completely forgotten that she was to dine with me. May I take you to dinner, Jane?

JANE

That would be lovely. I'm very hungry.

TOWER

To borrow your favorite word—it will be *cozy*.

FROBISHER

(*His voice is heard booming off stage*)

All right, Wilson, you needn't announce me.

(*He is back again.*)

JANE

Why, Allan—what have you come back for? I thought you had a date.

FROBISHER

I did. Thanks to you I've missed it. You not only ruined



J A N E

my afternoon—you've ruined my evening! Willie, I'd even go to dinner with you!

TOWER

I've asked Jane to go to dinner with me. Won't you join us? (*Can't resist the final barb*) With you around, Jane will appreciate me all the more.

FROBISHER

(*Defiantly*)

I'll take my chances!

JANE

(*As she looks from one to the other*)

Oh, it will be such a relief for once . . .

TOWER

What?

JANE

(*As the two men flank her she links her arms through theirs*)

To spend an evening with two men of my own age!

They start off gaily as the curtain falls.

ACT THREE

ACT THREE

Scene: The same.

Time: Ten days later. Late afternoon.

At rise: JANE, her shoes off and wearing glasses, is propped up on pillows on the settee reading PETER'S poems. TOWER comes in.

TOWER

Forgive me for disturbing you, Jane.

JANE

You don't disturb me in the least. I'm just reading Peter's poems. Have you read them?

TOWER

Yes, I have.

JANE

What do you think of them?

TOWER

One day he will write excellent prose.

JANE

I must say they're a bit over my head. They're so full of Greek and Latin phrases. How many languages that boy knows!

TOWER

Eventually he may even conquer English.

JANE

JANE

Now William, you mustn't be bitter. He's going to be your son-in-law.

TOWER

It is *that* I came to see you about, Jane.

JANE

(*Sits up*)

I can't see too much of you, William. You always give me a fresh point of view.

TOWER

I'm afraid that the point of view you will get today is hardly fresh—rather conventional, in fact. I find that as a father, I am conventional.

JANE

Oh, you come as a father?

TOWER

Yes. As a father, I feel about the same as any other father. I want Ann to make a reasonably good marriage.

JANE

I feel sure that Peter has a future.

TOWER

Perhaps. It is his present that worries me. You're a practical woman, and you know as well as I do that there are very few calamities in life in which the possession of money is not a mitigation.

J A N E

JANE

I believe in Peter. If one can't believe in the possibilities of human nature, what can one believe in?

TOWER

I am a skeptic, not a believer.

JANE

The more I get to know you, the more I understand why in your stories the wives are always murdering the husbands.

TOWER

You do me an injustice. Often the husbands murder the wives. But to return to Ann. As I am leaving England for rather a long time, I appeal to you to help get her out of this impossible situation.

JANE

I don't think it is an impossible situation.

TOWER

Isn't it obvious that so long as Peter's wife remains in a prison camp there can be no possible future for Ann?

JANE

I'm taking steps to get her out.

TOWER

And what if she does get out? What happens then?

JANE

JANE

(After a moment)

I am going to adopt Peter's wife.

TOWER

(Stares at her)

Adopt her? Why?

JANE

For one thing, it will make it easier for her to stay in this country. And for another, I haven't any children of my own. So why shouldn't I?

TOWER

Good God! Won't that make Ann's position even more anomalous?

JANE

Peter will get a divorce.

TOWER

(Testily)

You are a really determined matchmaker, aren't you?

JANE

(With a gleam)

No, Ann is.

TOWER

(After a moment's reflection)

But Gilbert? How will Gilbert enjoy all this, do you think?

J A N E

JANE

I don't know. I haven't told him yet.

TOWER

If I know Gilbert he won't care for it one bit. You might lose him.

JANE

(*Tranquilly*)

I have anticipated that also (TOWER *is extremely interested in this*) Gilbert is bound to leave me sooner or later. I never expected this to last forever.

TOWER

(*With quick revelation*)

So that's the way the land lies! I see!

JANE

What do you see?

TOWER

It's happened already, has it?

JANE

What?

TOWER

Gilbert is leaving you.

JANE

(*Quite content with this interpretation*)

Millie always predicted it, didn't she?

JANE

TOWER

Poor Jane! My sympathy!

JANE

Thank you, William.

TOWER

What will Gilbert do?

JANE

I hope he will marry again—a girl of his own age—and be very happy.

TOWER

It seems to me you are amazingly calm about it!

JANE

Since it's inevitable, why fret?

TOWER

You appear to be an extraordinary mixture, Jane, of the Oracle of Delphi and Dale Carnegie.

WILSON

(*Comes in*)

Excuse me, madam. Mr. Peter Crewe on the telephone for you.

JANE

Thank you, Wilson, I'll speak to him from my room. (*As she goes to stairs*) You're not going right away, are you, William?

J A N E

TOWER

No, I want to see Ann.

JANE

(From stair landing)

Good. I do so enjoy talking to you! I know dimly who the Oracle of Delphi was—but Dale Carnegie . . . Wasn't he an American who spawned libraries and didn't he hate books?

(She goes up.)

MRS. TOWER

(Comes in from library)

Well, Willie—did you get anywhere with her?

TOWER

I'm afraid not.

MRS. TOWER

(Bursting with righteous indignation)

She's responsible! She's responsible for this whole wretched affair. She's got Ann under her spell. And what infuriates me to madness is that she acts as if everything were milk and honey between us. I haven't spoken to her for weeks. But she pays no attention. She's got no pride. I never met a woman with so little pride.

TOWER

(Can't resist having a little fun)

Still, Millicent, I have a bit of news that may interest you.

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

(*Long-suffering*)

It can't be good news and I can't stand any more bad news. What is it?

TOWER

It's about Jane and Gilbert.

MRS. TOWER

(*Avid*)

What about Jane and Gilbert?

TOWER

(*Doling it out slowly*)

Your prediction has come true, I'm afraid.

MRS. TOWER

(*Quivering with joyful anticipation*)

What prediction? You mean . . . that Gilbert will . . .
Now don't tantalize me, Willie! What is it?

TOWER

(*Crisply*)

Gilbert is leaving Jane.

MRS. TOWER

(*Gasps with joy*)

No! Willie! No!

TOWER

(*With Mephistophelian glee*)

Yes! Sad, isn't it?

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

(*Ecstatic*)

It's happened! It's happened at last!

TOWER

Don't be so depressed about it.

MRS. TOWER

Did she tell you?

TOWER

I nudged it out of her.

MRS. TOWER

(*A freshet of joy*)

What did I tell you, Willie? It was inevitable—I said so from the beginning. And now it's happened! It's happened at last!

TOWER

Always pleasant to have a prophecy fulfilled, isn't it?

MRS. TOWER

(*Now feels she can be generous*)

Poor Jane! She'll be heartbroken! Is she heartbroken?

TOWER

I didn't make an anatomical examination, but superficially she appears to take it quite philosophically.

JANE

MRS. TOWER

(Dramatizing to the hilt)

Abandoned! Abandoned at her age! You must be very nice to her.

TOWER

I shall lift gallantry to its zenith.

MRS. TOWER

(Quivering with curiosity and joy)

But for who, Willie? Jane—for who?

TOWER

Millicent, your melancholy is playing havoc with your syntax.

MRS. TOWER

You know perfectly well what I mean. Obviously Gilbert is leaving Jane for somebody—but for who?

TOWER

Jane didn't tell me.

MRS. TOWER

(Aggrieved)

Didn't you pump her?

TOWER

I didn't wish to compound her grief.

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

(*The crusade of her life*)

I'll find out. Leave it to me. I'll find out.

TOWER

I leave it to you with confidence.

MRS. TOWER

If she won't tell me, Gilbert will. (GILBERT *is coming down the stairs*) I'll find out from Gilbert . . . I'll . . . (GILBERT *comes in, headlong in flight*. MRS. TOWER *is forced to stop abruptly*) Oh—Gilbert!

GILBERT

Hello, Millicent. Delighted to hear my name in your conversation.

MRS. TOWER

(*Brimming with consolation*)

Dear Gilbert!

GILBERT

What is this tone? It implies bereavement. I haven't been bereaved—not that I know of.

MRS. TOWER

Dear Gilbert!

GILBERT

(*Mystified*)

I say! Is somebody dead? Anyone I know?

JANE

TOWER

(Mischievous; determined to exploit the possibilities of the situation)

On the contrary, Gilbert, far from anyone's having died, someone is about to come to life. My congratulations!

GILBERT

On what?

TOWER

On the forthcoming addition to your family!

GILBERT

What?

MRS. TOWER

(Transfixed with horror)

What did you say, Willie?

TOWER

(Casually)

Just what I said, Millicent. There is to be an addition to Jane and Gilbert's family.

GILBERT

What do you mean?

MRS. TOWER

How do you know?

TOWER

Jane just announced it.

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

(*Shrieks*)

It's a trick! It's a contemptible trick—to hold you, Gilbert.

GILBERT

What on earth are you talking about?

MRS. TOWER

Isn't that just like Jane! I always knew she was calculating. And now she's desperate! At her age! Gilbert, how could you!

GILBERT

This is very odd, you know . . .

MRS. TOWER

It's madness! At her age! She'll never survive! You should have thought of that, Gilbert. Do you mean to say you didn't know?

GILBERT

I didn't and I still don't.

TOWER

(*Solemnly*)

You soon will, Gilbert. Jane is going to tell you.

MRS. TOWER

Obviously you can't leave her now. You're sunk!

J A N E

GILBERT

(*Confronts* TOWER)

Willie, did Jane tell you that I was going to leave her?

TOWER

She did.

MRS. TOWER

If there's one thing in the world I despise, it's a woman who has a baby in order to hold a man.

TOWER

(*Wickedly*)

It didn't succeed when you tried it, Millicent, but perhaps it will with Jane.

MRS. TOWER

Willie! Did Jane tell you this or didn't she?

TOWER

She certainly did. And if there is one thing Jane doesn't do it's lie.

MRS. TOWER

There you are, Gilbert. What about it?

GILBERT

It's absurd! Jane knows my views on the subject of babies. I'm a Malthusian and babies are wasted on me.

J A N E

MRS. TOWER

Can't a Malthusian have a baby? What's a Malthusian anyway?

GILBERT

I believe that the human race invariably does the wrong thing and therefore I do not believe in adding to its numbers. There are far too many people in the world now.

MRS. TOWER

There's going to be one more!

GILBERT

Willie, have you been pulling Millicent's leg?

TOWER

In the interest of accuracy—Jane did tell me there was to be an addition to your family. But she did not say that she meant to provide that addition personally. She means to adopt it.

MRS. TOWER

(Her head swimming)

Adopt!

GILBERT

Adopt?

TOWER

Adopt.

J A N E

GILBERT

Who?

MRS. TOWER

Why?

TOWER

Which question would you like me to answer first?

GILBERT

Who?

TOWER

(Simply)

Peter's wife.

GILBERT

(Sees the whole thing now)

Of course—Peter's wife.

MRS. TOWER

Peter's wife?

MAID

(Comes down stairs)

Excuse me, sir, Miss Ann would like to know if you can go upstairs to see her for a minute.

TOWER

Certainly. *(As he goes—to GILBERT)* I'll say this for Jane—with you for a husband and a girl of about your age for a

JANE

daughter, you'll make a most engaging family group.

(He goes upstairs.)

MRS. TOWER

(Wastes no time)

Are you going to stand for this, Gilbert?

GILBERT

I never heard anything so high-handed! To fasten this grubby girl on me along with everything else . . .

MRS. TOWER

Then why do you stand for it?

GILBERT

This time Jane has gone a bit too far!

MRS. TOWER

Gilbert, don't you think you ought to face the fact?

GILBERT

Which one?

MRS. TOWER

That you and Jane don't speak the same language. She'll never belong to our world. Never! She's a foreigner!

GILBERT

I'm beginning to realize that. As a matter of fact, I knew it all the time but I never let myself face it. Still—if I do

JANE

leave Jane it will give me a feeling of being left rather high and dry.

MRS. TOWER

Nonsense! You have all the attributes of success. Great success! You're young and attractive and clever. You're an artist.

GILBERT

You are so kind. You are the kindest woman in the world.

MRS. TOWER

It isn't kindness to do things for someone one's fond of—for someone as beguiling as you. You know there has always been an unexpressed sympathy and warmth between us.

GILBERT

(Who begins to see a new haven)

That night we went to the opera—wasn't it fun?

MRS. TOWER

Heaven! I enjoyed myself so much it didn't seem like the opera at all. That's what I say; we speak the same language. Why, even Allan, he's not . . .

GILBERT

I thought you adored Allan.

MRS. TOWER

I used to, but he's just a habit—a crude habit. Now, you—

JANE

you're sensitive. I love sensitive people. They make me blossom.

GILBERT

Dear Millicent . . .

MRS. TOWER

You will be the most welcome guest in this house. And I'll see that you get all the commissions you want. I see no reason why you shouldn't design my dresses for me—for as long as Willie can afford to pay for them. (*She laughs at her own wit*) But there—I expect Jane will get you back no matter what I say.

GILBERT

Not this time, she won't. I promise you, Millicent.

MRS. TOWER

Oh, yes, she will. She'll twist you around her meddlesome little finger. (*JANE is coming downstairs unseen by them*) She'll chirp at you in her bird-like voice—all flutes and harps . . .

JANE

(*As she comes in*)

Why, Millie—you make me sound like a little symphony!

MRS. TOWER

(*Turns and sees her*)

Dear Jane . . .

JANE

JANE

Dear Millie . . .

MRS. TOWER

Oh, Jane! My heart goes out to you!

JANE

Does it? Why?

MRS. TOWER

I don't really know why, but it does. I can understand people being shocked by the unexpected—but *why* when it's inevitable? But don't say I didn't warn you. Thank God, *my* conscience is clear!

(*She goes upstairs.*)

JANE

(*To GILBERT*)

What *have* you been telling Millie?

GILBERT

I haven't been doing the talking. You have.

JANE

I have?

GILBERT

Yes, to Willie. About this crazy idea of yours to adopt Peter's wife. Are you serious about it?

JANE

Perfectly serious.

JANE

GILBERT

It seems to be your fixed determination to make me ridiculous.

JANE

Why will it do that?

GILBERT

She's my age. Won't it seem a bit odd?

JANE

If I can stand it—you can.

GILBERT

Look here, Jane, when I married you I thought you were sensible. I had no idea your head was full of sentimental, outmoded ideas.

JANE

Such as?

GILBERT

Such as that idiotic journey you took on our honeymoon. Suppose you do get that dreary girl out? There will be millions left. Are you going to adopt all of them?

JANE

(Quietly)

One does what one can.

GILBERT

The drug of altruism. Very satisfying to the ego.

JANE

JANE

(*Studying him anew*)

You're hard, aren't you?

GILBERT

I'm realistic and not sentimental.

JANE

You're selfish, aren't you?

GILBERT

That word is also ridden with sentimentality. Of course I'm selfish. Everybody is selfish. It's a contradiction in terms to say that one is not selfish. Look at the word itself—it means a consciousness and a preoccupation with one's self. Well, one's self is all one has and all one knows. Can one get out of one's self? Only by dying. The use of the word as a term of reproach makes me sick. Anybody who says he isn't selfish is either a liar or a hypocrite. It's the slogan of the reformers who use it to satisfy their own self-esteem! (*She remains silent. He looks at her a moment*) Jane! What's the matter? (*She says nothing; she is staring ahead of her*) You are in a trance. Jane! What's the matter?

JANE

I was just wondering . . .

GILBERT

Yes?

JANE

Never mind.

JANE

GILBERT

But—tell me though . . .

JANE

I was just wondering if . . .

GILBERT

Well?

JANE

If you're not too old for me!

(TOWER comes down.)

GILBERT

(*Can't believe his ears*)

If I'm what? (*Aware that he has an alternative with MILLICENT; coldly*) You know, Jane, I think you're probably quite right. (*With a glance at TOWER on stair landing*) And as you find me too old for you, you are now perfectly at liberty to marry someone younger!

(*He goes out through hall. The outer door slams.*)

TOWER

That sounded very final.

JANE

It is.

TOWER

Are you unhappy?

JANE

JANE

No. I think I'm rather relieved. Poor Gilbert—I can't blame him. He's given me so much gaiety and fun. He's shown me a kind of life I have never known before. I'm very grateful to him, really.

TOWER

Then Benjamin Franklin was right after all.

WILSON

(Comes in and announces)

Lord Frobisher.

JANE

Allan, I'm so glad to see you.

FROBISHER

(Very down in the mouth, disagreeably)

Thank you, Jane.

TOWER

What's the matter, Allan? You look liverish.

FROBISHER

I came here to see Jane on business. Jane, what's wrong with that husband of yours?

JANE

Why?

FROBISHER

As I got out of my car he bounded out of the front door,

J A N E

stared me straight in the face and said: "My God! Too old for her!"

TOWER

Allan, you must be very tender with Jane.

FROBISHER

Why?

TOWER

(Dramatically)

She is bereft, abandoned. Gilbert is deserting her.

FROBISHER

Serves her right.

JANE

(Mildly)

Allan that's not very gallant.

FROBISHER

On you, Mrs. Dabney, to exercise gallantry would be like singing madrigals to a deaf-mute!

TOWER

You know, Jane, Allan is so rude I think he must be very taken with you.

JANE

I would like that to be true, because, as a matter of fact, I'm very taken with Allan.

JANE

TOWER

(Carrying on the situation he sees developing)

And now that you're going to be free again, Jane, the field is open, isn't it? I was just thinking—it might be very amusing to be married to you, Jane. It would certainly keep one on one's mettle.

(JANE and TOWER exchange looks. Now that he has thrown out the hint, TOWER cannot resist exploring its possibilities. JANE plays along with him.)

JANE

Thank you, William. I can return the compliment. It would be fascinating to be married to you.

FROBISHER

(To JANE)

Marry Willie! Last man on earth for anyone to marry.

JANE

Why, Allan?

TOWER

Why, indeed? I feel a reckless impulse to propose to you, Jane.

JANE

Why suppress it?

TOWER

But I can't propose to you in front of Allan.

JANE

JANE

Why not? It might give him some idea of how it's done. It's the one form of approach in which he's had very little experience.

TOWER

(In complete cahoots with her)

You wouldn't seriously consider marrying Allan, would you?

JANE

(A glance at TOWER, then a look at FROBISHER. She nudges FROBISHER farther along on the sofa to make room for TOWER.)

Let's talk about it! *(TOWER edges himself in beside her. The three sit in a row very close together)* Now, William—why not?

TOWER

For one thing, Allan's scarcely housebroken.

JANE

(Demurely)

That would give me something to do.

TOWER

I could offer you a more advanced form of occupation.

JANE

Could you, William? What would it be?

JANE

FROBISHER

(Very jealous actually)

I hope it happens! You deserve each other. The coldest man in England . . .

JANE

Oh, I think you're wrong there, Allan. I think William is very emotional, really.

FROBISHER

(Scornfully)

That's a joke!

JANE

You, Allan, are passionate. William is emotional.

FROBISHER

You deserve each other. I'll go to your wedding and laugh my head off!

TOWER

Pagliariacci! (*To JANE*) Obviously he is so annoyed at the prospect, he must really be interested in you. His is not an original mind and the fact that I'm involved makes him feel that perhaps there are possibilities in you he hadn't suspected.

(He takes JANE's hand.)

JANE

You are naughty, William. Don't mind him, Allan. He is a dramatist and he cannot resist what he considers a "situation."

JANE

TOWER

(He gets up)

I certainly can't resist this one! I'll give you exactly five minutes, Allan. Get rid of your business with Jane, during which time I shall collect my thoughts in the garden. Then I shall return and propose to Jane with consummate grace and ultimate efficiency!

(He blows her a kiss and goes into the garden.)

JANE

(At once)

Now, Allan—any news?

FROBISHER

Yes. I've done it. The girl is out.

JANE

(Moved)

Really?

FROBISHER

In fact she arrives in London at seven o'clock this evening. Once I get started I work pretty fast. That's what I came to tell you. Somebody'd better go to Croydon to meet her.

JANE

(Her hand on his arm)

Bless you!

FROBISHER

Jane, I wish to make one thing very clear. *(He removes*

JANE

her hand) I did not do this for you!

JANE

Well, whoever you did it for . . .

FROBISHER

In fact, last time I left you I was determined not to do it. Absolutely determined.

JANE

What made you change your mind?

FROBISHER

It was that bloody German Ambassador. He got my back up.

JANE

I can't thank you enough. I shan't attempt to.

FROBISHER

Since I didn't do it for you, you're under no obligation to thank me. (*Awkwardly*) May I crave your indulgence and pour myself a drink?

JANE

(*Warmly*)

You've earned the right to all your indulgences.

FROBISHER

(*With bitterness*)

I may have earned the right—but thanks to you—I've lost the knack!

J A N E

JANE

What do you mean?

FROBISHER

When I look back at my life before I met you, it seems like the Green Pastures.

JANE

Were you really happy, Allan, or were you just busy?

FROBISHER

I was happy! Damned happy. (*Pitifully*) Jane, please let me keep the good times I had in the past.

JANE

Of course, Allan, if you cherish them.

FROBISHER

(*Brooding into his glass*)

Ever since you made that first remark . . .

JANE

What remark?

FROBISHER

About my being an elderly adolescent . . .

JANE

I'll never say it again.

JANE

FROBISHER

(*Angrily*)

But you think it! You damn well think it!

JANE

No, I don't. I think you're the sweetest, the kindest, the dearest . . .

FROBISHER

(*In a fury*)

For pity's sake, Jane, don't drown me in the milk of human kindness. I'm a selfish, egotistical, sadistic, malevolent man. I am vulgar and sensual and ambitious. And I enjoyed it all—till I met you. I wish to God, Jane, you'd go back to Liverpool and your tea-cozies!

JANE

Actually, that is exactly what I am going to do.

FROBISHER

(*Feels a twinge at this but turns on her to cover it*)

You're a menace!

JANE

A menace?

FROBISHER

You've undermined me!

JANE

Undermined you?

J A N E

FROBISHER

With girls. I've lost my knack.

JANE

Perhaps you've just lost the impulse.

FROBISHER

I have as much impulse as ever. (*Bridling*) What are you suggesting?

JANE

I'm putting the most charitable interpretation on it.

FROBISHER

(*Indigo*)

Lost my confidence. Called up a girl today to ask her to go to dinner tonight. She had another date! Never happened before. I'm self-conscious. I think now when I call 'em up...

JANE

What do you think?

FROBISHER

I think "Bloody old fool, what do you think you're doing?" It's you, Jane! It's you have done that. I'll never forgive you for it!

JANE

Dear Allan. Perhaps you're growing up.

JANE

FROBISHER

(Piling up the indictment)

And not only that . . .

JANE

More?

FROBISHER

Yes, more. What you said the other day . . .

JANE

What did I say the other day?

FROBISHER

That the girls were only interested because I did well by them. That I've never been loved for myself alone.

JANE

I couldn't have said that.

FROBISHER

But you did—you did say it.

JANE

Well, if I did I was mistaken or I was lying. (*With tenderness*) Because you are loved for yourself alone, Allan, and no one knows that better than I do.

(He has no comprehension of what she means by this.)

JANE

FROBISHER
(*Vindictively*)

Still, you're getting a bit of your own back, aren't you?

JANE

How?

FROBISHER

That young bounder's deserting you. Married you for your money and now he's quitting you. He's leaving you high and dry. What are you going to do now, All-Wise, All-Seeing Jane? What are you going to do now?

JANE

Marry someone of my own age—if I can find him.

FROBISHER

(*This starts a new spiral of suspicion; he backs away a step*)
If you can find him . . .

JANE

Yes. I'd have to find him first, wouldn't I?

FROBISHER

I see.

(*Backs away another step.*)

JANE

What do you see?

FROBISHER

I know you well enough to realize that when you announce

JANE

a hope, it's probably already a fact! When you say you want to marry someone of your own age . . . (*With a quick look toward the garden*) Oh, my God! Of course—Tower! How stupid of me not to realize it before . . . how stupid . . . (*He laughs uncontrollably*) Now I understand why he's here all the time. Why did he come back from India?

JANE

I imagine when you're in India, there comes a moment when you leave it.

FROBISHER

You're too shrewd to let Gilbert go without having somebody to go to.

JANE

I adore William.

FROBISHER

(*In a jealous dither*)

Obviously.

JANE

(*This is all playing beautifully into her hands*)

He's the most fascinating man I've ever met. Imagine going to Malaya and all those remote places and seeing them through his eyes. Still, he's rather complicated. Perhaps it would be safer to marry a simple man—like you!

FROBISHER

(*Aghast*)

Oh, my God!

JANE

JANE

What if I have set my heart on marrying you?

FROBISHER

Now I do want a drink!

(He runs to liquor table and pours himself a quick one.)

JANE

(To his back)

It's true I'm not an actress but I am married. Doesn't that appeal to you, Allan?

FROBISHER

Please, Jane, don't say that!

TOWER

(Returns from the garden, watch in hand)

Clear out, Allan. Your five minutes are up.

FROBISHER

(Goes quickly to him in a kind of panic)

Willie, you're always going some place. Where are you going this time?

TOWER

Tibet.

FROBISHER

Will you take me with you?

TOWER

I'm afraid you'd be bored.

J A N E

FROBISHER

I might be bored, but I'd be safe!

JANE

Really, William, for a professional Don Juan, your friend Allan is the most easily frightened man I've ever met.

FROBISHER

(In extremis)

I'd rather be frightened than trapped. I'm going to my club for a drink.

JANE

(To TOWER)

Also, your friend Allan drinks too much.

FROBISHER

(Shouting defiantly)

Also, Mrs. Dabney—I am going to call up a girl!

(He rushes out.)

JANE

(Calling after him)

Good luck! *(The front door slams hard)* Poor Allan!

TOWER

Why do you say that? The old reprobate's done awfully well for himself with his photographs, his undigested editorials and his peculiar buffoon-like charm. Undeniably, he has charm.

J A N E

JANE

He's no fool. He knows what people think of him. He's sensitive.

TOWER

He's vain.

JANE

You don't like him, do you?

TOWER

The odd thing is, I do. I don't expect people to be better than they are.

JANE

You have an extraordinary detachment.

TOWER

So have you, Jane. That's what attracts me to you.

JANE

What a pity your marriage didn't work! Is there really no hope for you and Millie?

TOWER

I have made very serious mistakes in my life. Many of them have come from my abnormal inability to cause other people pain. The truth is, my marriage with Millicent was no good the moment it occurred.

JANE

WILSON

(*Comes in*)

Excuse me, Madam, Mr. Crewe is here.

JANE

Oh, yes, I sent for him. Come on in, Peter.

(*PETER comes in.*)

TOWER

Peter, I have done everything I could to discourage Ann from going on with you, but I have to acknowledge complete failure.

PETER

Well, sir, you have so much success in other fields.

TOWER

Don't be contemptuous, Peter. I have read all your poems, even if they are almost unreadable, and I detect something in them that may one day make *you* a success.

PETER

(*Pleased*)

Awfully glad you think so, Mr. Tower.

ANN

(*Comes downstairs*)

Peter! Well, Jane, any news?

JANE

Wonderful news! Peter, your wife's in England!

JANE

ANN

Jane!

PETER

I can't believe it. It's impossible!

TOWER

Not for Jane.

JANE

I didn't do it. Lord Frobisher did.

PETER

Really?

JANE

I know you put Lord Frobisher under a reactionary label. But in spite of his political opinions, he can respond to a human situation.

PETER

I suppose that's the essential difference between us and the dictators. Even if we disapprove of someone we allow them to live. All right, Jane, you win. As you say he is kind, I shall allow Lord Frobisher to live.

TOWER

I congratulate you on your tolerance, my boy. (*He solemnly shakes hands with PETER.*)

JANE

Thanks to Allan, your wife arrives at Croydon at seven

JANE

o'clock this evening. You must go to the airport to meet her. Both of you.

PETER

I'll never forget what you've done for us, Jane. Neither will Maria.

JANE

She is about to become my daughter, isn't she? Hurry along.

ANN

Good-bye, Jane. We'll telephone from the airport.

(As they start out, TOWER calls ANN back.)

TOWER

Ann...

ANN

(Returning)

Yes, Dad?

TOWER

Will you accept my blessing? And you, Peter? Will you accept it, too? *(Holds out his hand to PETER, who takes it)*
Can you find it in your hearts to be generous to the defeated?

(TOWER embraces ANN.)

PETER

(Simply)

Thank you very much, Mr. Tower. Please don't think me

JANE

superior; because, although I couldn't afford to admit it to my own advanced circle, I do admire you very much. (*A moment and then PETER pulls ANN's hand*) Come on!

(*They go out. TOWER looks after them.*)

JANE

(*Her eyes on TOWER*)

William, I believe you are quite moved.

TOWER

The young are very touching. They don't know what's ahead of them. We oldsters are moved by them because we do know. We remember our own youth, our hopes, and how life has slaughtered them.

JANE

Rubbish! You haven't done so badly.

TOWER

That remark, my dear Jane, is superficial. But I wasn't joking just now when I said I thought Allan was attracted to you. As a matter of fact, I believe he's in love with you.

JANE

I think he *is*—but he's terrified.

TOWER

Shall we knock him out of his panic?

JANE

(*Looks at him fondly for a moment*)

JANE

Shall we? (*Impulsively puts her arms around TOWER and kisses him*) I adore you, William.

FROBISHER

(*Bolts in, sees this*)

Quite lovey-dovey, aren't you? I won't have it, Jane!
You can't do this to me!

JANE

What can't I do to you?

FROBISHER

You can't undermine me and then abandon me!

JANE

What happened to that girl you went to telephone? Was she out?

FROBISHER

(*In deep depression*)

She was in.

JANE

Well?

FROBISHER

(*Sepulchral*)

Lost my knack!

JANE

Don't be depressed, Allan. Call up another one. You know so many.

JANE

TOWER

(Starts in at once)

Allan, your coming in this minute is most inopportune. I was just about to propose to Jane. Will you please go into the garden and wait?

FROBISHER

(Savage)

I will not go in the garden. I have hay fever and gardens are death to me!

TOWER

It's very difficult with you prowling about. *(To JANE)* How can I do a polished job with that morose buffalo sitting there?

JANE

Never mind him. Rely on your own technique. I'm sure you'll do a very good job.

(Takes pillow and throws it in front of TOWER for him to propose from.)

TOWER

(Acknowledges the courtesy)

Thank you. I'll try, but don't expect my best. *(He starts to kneel down but the joint in his knee pains him and he winces)* Oh! *(JANE assists him to his knees)* Now Jane, my career is the victory of character over circumstance. So in a sense is yours. Shall we merge forces?

JANE

JANE

Together we might have too much character. Don't you think we ought to distribute some of it?

FROBISHER

(*Morosely*)

I pity those that get it!

TOWER

Allan, I must ask you please not to interrupt. (*Resuming, to JANE*) You remember, Jane, I once told you that as I'm walking on one side of Bond Street I am irked by the wish to be on the other? I think that with you . . . (*Takes her hand*) I would be content to remain on your side of Bond Street.

JANE

Dear William, I must warn you if Allan were on the other side I should be tempted to cross the street.

TOWER

But, Jane, it is *I* who am proposing to you, not Allan.

FROBISHER

(*Out of his befuddlement*)

Jane, do you think it is dignified at your age jumping in and out of marriage like this?

JANE

I don't really know, Allan. It seems when you've been married more than once it gets easier.

JANE

TOWER

Jane, you simply must concentrate on my proposal!

MRS. TOWER

(Coming down from upstairs, sees them)

What is this? What is going on?

FROBISHER

He's proposing to Jane.

MRS. TOWER

What is he proposing?

FROBISHER

Marriage.

TOWER

(In fabricated anger)

Well, I would if I could get five minutes to myself!

MRS. TOWER

(Hysterical)

Marvelous! Perfect! Isn't it just like Jane—coming between husband and wife like this!

TOWER

Millicent's time-sense is defective.

MRS. TOWER

Not that I want you back, Willie, as you very well know.

JANE

TOWER

(*Mock anger*)

No man ever proposed under such unfavorable conditions. Jane, where was I? What point had I reached?

FROBISHER

(*Surly*)

You were telling her how much character you had. I wish to God, Willie, you'd go to Tibet.

TOWER

(*With exaggerated romantic flamboyance*)

Jane—dearest Jane—won't you come with me to my villa in the South of France? There, with the Mediterranean at your feet and the starry canopy of sky overhead . . .

MRS. TOWER

(*Cutting in*)

Sounds very reminiscent . . .

JANE

It's beautiful, William. But I'm going back to Liverpool.

TOWER

(*Rises, picks up pillow*)

I withdraw my offer.

MRS. TOWER

Thank goodness! (*To JANE*) But what will you do with your house in Belgrave Square?

JANE

JANE

I shall give it to some charity. What do you think, Allan?
A home for wayward girls?

TOWER

Admirable! Allan will fill it!

FROBISHER

(Suddenly galvanized into action)

Jane and I will fill it! We're going to live in it!

MRS. TOWER

Allan! What are you saying?

FROBISHER

(Ignores her; to JANE)

You owe it to me. You've robbed me of my confidence.
You've got to give it back to me.

MRS. TOWER

If this is a joke, it's in very poor taste.

TOWER

It's not a joke, Millicent. Allan is in love—calf love.

MRS. TOWER

(Completely bewildered)

Allan in love with Jane? *(To JANE)* What about those
habits? What will you do with those habits?

JANE

JANE

I shall domesticate them.

(TOWER, *his object achieved, feels he can relax. He lies down on the settee and covers his face with a pillow.*)

MRS. TOWER

(*To JANE*)

You're running such a risk. And for what?

JANE

For a very old-fashioned reason, Millie. I love Allan.

MRS. TOWER

Love! (*She begins to laugh hysterically*) Love! (*She snaps the pillow from TOWER's face*) Did you hear that Willie—love!

TOWER

(*Sits up*)

Yes, Millicent. Surely you've heard of love. It's been so much written about!

MRS. TOWER

But it's impossible!

FROBISHER

(*On his feet, militant*)

Why is it impossible? What's wrong with me?

MRS. TOWER

I've never heard anything so grotesque, so fantastic, so unbelievable!

JANE

FROBISHER

Why do you say that? Jane marrying me for love. . . .
Why is it unbelievable?

JANE

(Goes to ALLAN and stands beside him)

Perhaps, dear Allan, it is unbelievable because it is the truth!

ALLAN, his confidence restored, takes JANE'S hand, lifts it to his lips and kisses it as the curtain falls.

Date Due



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B421j'
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